ALLOTMENTS AND SMALL HOLDINGS IN OXFORDSHIRE

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ALLOTMENTS AND SMALL HOLDINGS IN OXFORDSHIRE

A SURVEY

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BY

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PREFACE

This survey of the allotments and small holdings of Oxfordshire, made in the latter part of 1913 and the earlier part of 1914, was to have formed a part of the Report on the agriculture of the county recently issued on behalf of the Institute.[1] But of late years public interest in this branch of the industry has been stimulated by the consideration of problems connected with the improvement of conditions of life among rural workers, the retention of the labourer on the land, and the increase of food production, so that a closer study of the history and present circumstances of the small agricultural holdings of the county seemed to be called for than their position in its rural economy would appear, at first sight, to justify. Thus, this special inquiry was undertaken with the object of determining, as far as possible, the conditions which have led to the creation of allotments and small holdings in Oxfordshire, and to consider how far these conditions are likely to prevail in the future. At the same time, the causes of failure and the circumstances necessary for the most successful development have been investigated.

The survey is the work of Mr. A. W. Ashby, research assistant in the Institute, and was carried out by him with the aid of a research scholarship of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries. The work was greatly facilitated by the ready co-operation of a large number of interested persons,

[1] *Agriculture in Oxfordshire*, by John Orr, with a chapter on soils by C. G. T. Morison. Oxford University Press, 1916.

to whom the author and the Institute are very much indebted for their kindly interest and assistance. Many allotment owners, or their agents, allotment cultivators and small holders not only offered information with regard to their own holdings, but placed time at the disposal of the author to direct attention to other items of interest. Without the assistance, also, of numerous overseers, assistant overseers, and rate collectors, it would have been impossible to obtain some of the information. Thanks are also due to Mr. P. Elford and Mr. S. Heaton, for information on educational work on gardens and allotments, and to Mr. Lester Smith, the county land agent, whose willingness to supply information on many points that arose is greatly appreciated.

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Director.

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PART I. ALLOTMENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE OF ALLOTMENTS IN RURAL ECONOMY

It has been said sometimes that the history of allotments began with an act of Elizabeth. This is not strictly true, because a modern allotment is detached from a dwelling or other building, while the provision of the Elizabethan act was that the land should be attached to cottages. But the statement brings out a conception of land policy which has always existed in our country, though at times it seemed to disappear and often was ineffective. The chief aim of this policy was to secure that at least the head of each family occupied by the cultivation of land should have some direct control, as owner or occupier, of some of the land he cultivated. The landless labourer was considered in some degree an anomaly and a social danger, and many measures have been taken to advance some form of small holding.[1] Whenever a change occurred which threatened to divorce the worker from the control of land, measures were taken sooner or later to assist him to maintain control over a small portion of cultivated ground. The reasons advanced in favour of this policy have been economic, social, and political in character, but often there existed a sentiment in its favour which lies deeper than any stated reason. When possessed of some feeling of property in land, rural workers develop a strong love of locality and a keen community feeling. Also, in proportion as their feeling of property in

[1] Statutes: 20 Hen. III, c. 4; 3 & 4 Ed. VI, c. 3; 4 Hen. VII, c. 19; 31 Eliz., c. 7.

land dwindles, their feeling of dependence on others for a livelihood increases. Sometimes this is accompanied with a sense of a loss of intellectual independence. When this has occurred there has been submission, migration, or a struggle, and it was to prevent the migration or the struggle that society stepped in to counteract economic forces and sought to re-establish the labourer on the land. It was after the disturbance of labour at the end of the eighteenth century that the present system of allotments was instituted, and it received its greatest stimulus during and immediately after the great struggle of the labourers during the seventies of the last century.

The chief grounds on which small cultivation of the allotment type has been advocated are that it increases population, enables a labourer to increase his income, gives him some stimulus towards living a moral life, and engenders in him some sense of property without which the property of others would not be immune from specific or general attack from members of his class. In recent years we have heard little of the effect of allotments on population, because it was generally recognized that some decrease of the number of persons engaged upon the land must occur as a result of the recent depression in agriculture, and apart from temporary dislocation no great strain was felt while our expanding industries absorbed the population which was leaving the land. Nor have we heard much of the moral effects of the allotment system, though it is still recognized that the sober and industrious man is the one most keen to become a tenant, and generally makes the best cultivator. But there can be no doubt whatever that allotments, in Oxfordshire at least, had considerable effect in enabling the labourer to remain upon the land during the early years of the depression. And were allotments abolished without previously providing the labourers with training in some other method of utilizing their leisure hours, some moral depreciation would undoubtedly occur. With the development of a great class of propertyless labourers in our cities, and the absence of that acute feeling of despair which

has sometimes driven the agrarian worker to lawless attacks on property, we have heard comparatively little of the need of giving the labourer some sense of the sanctity of property. It is now recognized that there is little fear of direct attacks on property from a propertyless class, whatever may be the fear of indirect attacks through political channels. But this argument has survived in the form of the demand for a 'rural social ladder', in which the allotment is the first rung. At present this argument has theoretical rather than practical importance, and it is as a means of supplementing the labourer's income that the allotment unit in agricultural economy stands out pre-eminently to-day.

The allotment system has been properly defined as 'the practice of dividing land in small portions for cultivation by agricultural labourers and other cottagers at their leisure, and after they have performed their ordinary day's work'. Or again: 'An allotment is a small piece of land, detached from a cottage, let to a person to be cultivated by him as an aid to his sustenance, but not in substitution for his labour for wages.' It is, however, in practice that the essential function of allotments stands out most clearly. After an extensive inquiry into the existence of allotments, made in 1887, it was found that, as a general rule, they were most numerous where wages were lowest.[1] Lord Onslow, writing on the same subject, states that 'in the northern counties, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Durham, Cumberland, and Lancashire, very little demand for allotments exist, chiefly owing to the high wages and to the fact that the practice generally obtains of hiring a labourer by the year only, at the expiration of which time he may leave his master and find himself engaged in quite a different part of the country'.[2] The specific experience of Oxfordshire verifies this conclusion.

I have estimated in a later chapter (p. 31) that from 1825

[1] See Craigie, 'Size and Distribution of Agricultural holdings,' *Journal of the Statistical Society*, 1887.

[2] *Landlords and Allotments*, 1886.

to 1840 some 600 to 800 allotments existed in the county; in 1871 there were 9,000; in 1885, 14,700, and in 1889 nearly 18,000. The average wage of ordinary farm workers was between 8*s*. and 9*s*. per week in 1850, from 10*s*. to 11*s*. in 1867, from 12*s*. to 14*s*. in 1875, 13*s*. 3*d*. in 1881, about 11*s*. to 12*s*. in 1886, and 12*s*. in 1891. As the rate of wages fell after the rise during the 'seventies, the demand for allotments increased; also while wages fell the labourers were careful to secure shorter hours of labour. There is evidence to the effect that the working day in Oxfordshire diminished by one and a half hours, or nine hours per week, during the later 'eighties. The Royal Commission on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture had reported in 1867 'that the best method by which the pecuniary condition of the agricultural labourer, where low, can be improved, and to which the legislature could give a salutary stimulus by simple and unobjectionable means' was 'a more general adoption of the practice of attaching such an amount of land to the labourer's cottage, or, in default of that, in assigning to him such an amount of land as near his dwelling as possible as will profitably employ the leisure hours of himself or his family'. After the breakdown of the efforts of the labourer to improve his condition in the 'seventies, this expedient was adopted by landlords, farmers, and the State. It was in this way that the system of employing men on a weekly engagement, for short hours, and on low wages, allowing them to increase their income by allotment cultivation, was established.

This connexion between allotments and low wages raises a grave question both for the farmer and the State. Farmers in the county admit that rates of wages are low, but in defence state that hours of labour are shorter and the rate of working slower than in counties where higher rates prevail. This statement raises many problems, amongst others that of the relative efficiency of employers in high and low wage counties, especially in the management of labour and the provision of efficient tools, machinery, and horses. There is little reason to doubt that more horses and

machinery are used where wages are high than where they are low, and this points to a conclusion that low wages may mean cheaper labour. When the interests of the whole group of employers are considered over more than one generation, however, the advantages of low wages tend to disappear. Should the rates of pay not be sufficient to induce the most intelligent and efficient of the workers to remain on the land, the standard of efficiency of the labourer declines, and labour becomes dearer, even at the standard rates of wages. Since 1906 this effect has been felt in Oxfordshire. Complaints, at first sporadic, then more general, have arisen that it was impossible to obtain milkers and men for skilled work. Further evidence on this point is provided by the census. Of the number of agricultural labourers, including all classes, 8·5 per cent. are sixty-five years of age, or over, in Oxfordshire, while in Durham the proportion is 4·2 and in Lancashire 4·3. The proportion for England and Wales is 7·4 per cent. Also when wages are very low they do not represent the total charge of the cost of labour on the farm. Indirect charges, especially in the form of poor rates, are increased. Oxfordshire is one of the agricultural counties in which the rates of paupers to population is over 30 per 1,000. In 1909, Norfolk had the highest rate with 38·5 per 1,000, and Oxfordshire came sixth on the list with 33·3 per 1,000. However, as the cost of maintaining paupers which are to some extent created by a system of low wages is not entirely borne by the agricultural industry, this indirect charge may not be equal to the charge which would be imposed by a wage adequate to provide a complete life-maintenance for the labourer. The farmer whose rate of wages is not sufficient to induce the best labourer to stay upon the land imperils the future effective power of the State in the production of food, which may prove to be one of its most vulnerable points. But the interest of the State is affected before a low rate of wages has been in existence long enough seriously to influence the supply of labour. The future of the State lies with its children. One of its first concerns is that these shall be

well nourished and nurtured. It would be difficult to find a family of a sober and industrious labourer in Oxfordshire which was actually without sufficient food to appease the appetites of every member; but in every village moderate-sized families of young parents and children could be found which are supplied with insufficient nourishment. A few years ago an unobtrusive but sincere friend of the Oxfordshire labourer showed that the standard dietary as established in Oxford workhouse cost 16*s.* 2*d.* per week[1] for an able-bodied man, wife, and four children. Perhaps some allowance must be made for waste in preparation in a public institution, but on the other hand the prices being fixed by contract for fairly large quantities were lower than those the labourer would have to pay for similar goods. The total earnings of many ordinary labourers in Oxfordshire would not be sufficient to meet such a bill for food alone, to say nothing of other necessaries. The allotment enables the labourer to supply part of the deficiency in his income, directly contributing many items to the family diet. Indeed it often contributes too much, especially of potatoes. The result is a diet containing little variety, deficient in some nutrients, leaving the consumer in a condition something like an engine on half steam.[2] This condition is more dangerous to the growing child than to the adult worker, because it leads so often to mental as well as physical lassitude, and frequently to restriction of mental growth.

Farmers recognize in practice the part allotments play in the dietary by paying higher wages to the men with responsibility who live in farm or 'tied' cottages. These men work more hours than the day-men, and have less time for garden or allotment cultivation, and more of their diet is purchased.

The fear that has at some periods been felt at the abolition of the interest in or the control of some kind of property on the part of the labourer is not so keenly felt in our own

[1] Table prepared by the late Mr. Adolphus Ballard, Clerk to the Oxford Incorporation.

[2] Cf. Lennard, *Agricultural Wages*, p. 94.

day. The development of a propertyless class of wage-earners in the big industries of our cities, with the attendant developments of institutions for mutual protection and help, e.g. the trade union and the co-operative society, have given the workers a new basis for economic and moral independence. Developments of a similar character might do as much for the agricultural labourer. In this connexion it is worthy of notice that if the late depression had not intervened, the extension and growth of the organization of the labourers in the 'seventies might have had this effect. This was undoubtedly the hope of some of the leaders of the organization who were actual labourers, and it was not until the wage movement failed that they fell back on the allotment demand and similar expedients. Where the union movement was less necessary, as in the north of England, neither farmers nor labourers have been anxious to establish allotments, because the conditions of employment have more nearly supplied the essential needs of the labourer.

There still remains to be considered the part of allotments in an agricultural or rural social ladder. This involves a general view of the possibilities of economic and social advancement open to the man who has spent the years of his adolescence as a farm labourer. The numbers of each class of farm workers employed in the county are:

Bailiffs and Foremen	270
Shepherds	735
Cattlemen	1,282
Horsemen	2,302
Day-men	8,017
Attendant of Agricultural machinery (classified with owners)	?

If all the foremen and bailiffs were drawn from the class of farm labourers (which they are not) there would be an opportunity in Oxfordshire for 2·2 per cent. of members of the other classes to rise to this position. The proportion of such positions open to farm labourers in England and Wales is 3·7 per cent. In the county of Kent it is 4 per cent, and

in Northumberland it is 5 per cent. And an examination of nineteen parishes by Mr. Lennard[1] shows that some 71 per cent. of the farmers were sons of farmers, though not necessarily sons of fathers who had actually been farming within the county. Of the other 29 per cent. a very small proportion may have been sons of labourers. But as the total of all classes of labourers outnumbers that of farmers and graziers by nearly seven to one, very few men can rise from the position of labourer to that of farmer. Thus a boy who leaves school at the age of thirteen, or thereabouts, and undertakes minor duties with horses in the stable and the field, may reach the summit of his social advancement as a horseman by the time he reaches the age of twenty-five years. A small minority may become head-carters on large farms working more than one team by the time they reach thirty-five years. If at some time he undertakes another branch of farm work, the boy may become a shepherd, one of the most responsible and best paid jobs on the farm, by the time he reaches about forty years, or he may become a cowman in charge of a fairly large herd at an earlier age. But the number of these positions is exceedingly small; and as may be seen from the figures, most farm workers in this county are destined to become day-men. This class includes a few men possibly possessing as much or more skill than the shepherd or cowman—these are the expert thatchers, hedgers, &c., a class which is rapidly disappearing. But the number of men in the class of general farm labourers is exceedingly important. In England and Wales their proportion to the total of all classes (shepherds, cattlemen, horsemen, and 'those not otherwise distinguished' or general labourers) is 57 per cent.; in Northumberland it is 45 per cent.; in Durham it is 62 per cent.; and in Oxfordshire it is 65 per cent. It appears, then, that there are fewer possibilities of attaining to a position of trust and responsibility while still remaining a labourer in Oxfordshire than is general. This is also the case with regard to the chances of

[1] Op. cit., pp. 57–9.

reaching a position which entails partial management as foreman or bailiff. There is thus a possibility for the young labourer to attain to a position of responsibility, for which he will be paid higher wages, with the charge of some kind of live stock; and beyond this there is little chance of advancement in his own occupation. If some provision for social advancement is necessary, it has to be found outside the scope of actual employment, having regard to the scale on which agriculture is organized at the present time.

Now it has been possible for nearly every labourer in the county to obtain one or more allotments during the last twenty-five, perhaps thirty, years. During this time they may have assisted a small number, perhaps 2 or 3 per cent. of the labourers in each generation, to attain independent positions. In very rare cases a man may rise from the position of labourer and allotment holder to that of a small holder, without engaging in other business, but in the vast majority of cases a man attains the latter position by engaging first in some petty business. It is rather the village tradesman than the farm worker who is assisted by allotments to become a small holder or later a farmer. And in the case of the labourer who becomes a small holder through a petty business it is rather the business than allotments which may be connected with it which enables him to do so. Since 1908, 213 agricultural labourers have applied to the Oxfordshire County Council for small holdings, and it is significant that of these no fewer than 145 applied in 1908, before the provisions of the Act were thoroughly understood. The total number, however, does not represent 2 per cent. of the total number of labourers, and only 2·6 per cent. of those over the age of twenty-five years, most of whom are allotment holders. But as the majority of those who applied have not actually secured holdings, the proportion of allotment holders who become independent cultivators is very small. Indeed, the significance of the allotment as an aid to wages indicates that except in some cases it cannot provide that margin for saving which alone will enable the labourer to accumulate sufficient capital to become an

independent cultivator. With an improvement in wages and greater facilities for obtaining small holdings, allotments would provide one step in an agricultural ladder for the person who is able to save, but for the majority of labourers the general hope for advancement must lie in the establishment of some system of farming which requires specialization of skill and the means to pay for it, with possibly some delegation of management, especially in the supervision of labour, which would provide posts analogous to that of the foremen employed in industries organized on a larger scale. Even on some of the larger farms, as organized at present, it would pay the managers to delegate more of the supervision of labour to an employee, and thus set themselves free for closer attention to the broader aspects of management, besides giving their younger labourers the stimulus of a hope of being able to rise to a position of responsibility and importance.

Farmers as a class have neglected to study the principles of the management of labour. There are several motives which induce men to work, or to do their best for an employer. Amongst these are the fear of starvation; the hope of improving the conditions of themselves or their families; the desire to excel, to excite envy, or to earn applause; the desire for self-expression through creation; the sense of group loyalty, or loyalty to an ideal. Many farmers have neglected the finer of these motives; and though they may occasionally be evident on farms, they are in those cases spontaneous in the labourer, rather than the results of efforts on the part of the employer. But there is still room for a further development, which the excitement of hope would do much to foster. The fear of more or less privation, and the hope of improvement in the condition of their families, are the motives which usually induce labourers to undertake allotment cultivation. The desire to excel, for self-expression, and loyalty to an ideal in cultivation often develop later; but the primary motive is to produce food for a family.

In this relation a vexed question has been raised amongst

labourers as to whether allotments tend to reduce or increase cash wages. When the extension of the allotment system occurred in Oxfordshire, about 1880, the immediate effect was to retard a decline. Labour was superabundant, and could not migrate without great difficulty; by providing employment for leisure time, due to shortening hours of labour, allotments assisted the labourers in the maintenance of rates of wages. But now that the supply of labour is not in excess of the regular demand, allotments help to keep down the rates of weekly wages, though not necessarily the actual time rates. If labour becomes more scarce, farmers should consider the advisability of paying higher wages and demanding greater service, either in time or in rate of work, and simultaneously with such demand labourers should consider the industrial methods of providing for mutual protection and help. It is along such lines that the best use of labour will be secured, and social welfare most advanced, rather than by the present system of short hours, at a slow rate of work, weekly engagements at low wages, and allotments. Such a system might involve the establishment in Oxfordshire of a custom prevalent in other counties of providing the labourer with 'potato land' or potatoes, and possibly, as in parts of Lincolnshire, with bacon. The system of providing potato land ploughed and manured by the farmer, or a definite quantity of potatoes, differs in its characteristics from that of allotments, in that it does not make the same demands on the labourer's time and energy. The provision of bacon would remove many a smouldering grievance. In parts of Oxfordshire where roots are grown the crops are subject to considerable reduction by the quantities taken by the workmen; as one farmer said: 'I don't mind a turnip for dinner, but I draw the line at feeding three pigs I don't sell.' Also vague statements are made about the loss of corn and cake. This attitude of the farmer towards the labourer's pig has been clearly brought out by recent suggestions from various quarters that facilities for pig-keeping should be increased, for on many farms the men living in farm-cottages are forbidden to keep pigs

or poultry. The bacon-allowance alternative should meet the farmer's difficulty, and would provide the labourer's chief supply of meat.

It is, however, in relation to the existing system of hiring and paying the day labourer that any survey of allotments must treat them.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF ALLOTMENTS

Lord Halsbury divides allotments into five classes[1]:

(1) Poor Allotments (established under Poor Laws from 1819 onwards).
(2) Fuel Allotments (established under Enclosure Awards, under the Private Enclosure Acts).
(3) Field Gardens (established under Enclosure Awards since the General Enclosure Act of 1845).
(4) Those established by Parochial Charities (under Allotments Extension Act, 1882).
(5) Those established by Public Action (under the various Acts since 1887).

To these must be added:

(6) Those established by private enterprise.
(7) Those established by co-operative or mutual action on the part of labourers.

Fuel Allotments.[2] However much opinions may differ as to the nature and extent of the rights or privileges of the villagers, as distinct from the commoners, over the common arable fields, pastures, and wastes of the villages, nobody

[1] *Laws of England.*

[2] The word *allotment* in its general legal aspect means any parcel or plot of land allotted or given to a person on the division of an estate in lands, and it gathered special significance during the chief period of the enclosure of the common fields, 1760 to 1845. In the Enclosure Awards it is constantly used to designate the parcels of land given to individuals from the common estate of the common fields and pastures. In the latter half of this period the word was also given a more limited and specific meaning which is best conveyed in the phrase of the time, 'an allotment to the labouring poor'. The economic meaning of the term as used from 1820 to the present time is a small parcel or plot of land occupied by a working man and constituting a subsidiary source of income, in addition to his wages.

would deny that they enjoyed at least some privileges. These varied considerably in different localities, but often they included the pasturing of animals on the wastes, and, almost without exception, the right to cut turf, peat, furze, or wood for fuel from the waste lands. The first 'allotments to the labouring poor' arose directly out of this right. Between the years 1760 and 1801 no less than 1,479 private Acts of Parliament were passed to enclose 2,428,721 acres of land, and many of these Acts, especially those passed after 1790, provided for an allotment to the poor of the parish in lieu of fuel rights.[1] In the recital of the allotments made by the Commissioners there is often to be found, next to the allotments to the Lord of the Manor, some such clause as this:

'A claim of a right to cut furze and goss (gorse) on waste having been delivered on behalf of the poor of . . . the Commissioners allot to such as do not occupy any part of the land to be enclosed:'

followed by the number and description of the parcel of ground set apart as fuel land.

Such allotments were generally made to the Lord of the Manor or to the Vicar and Churchwardens in trust for the poor of the parish. Thus, it was early recognized that the complete divorce of the village worker from the soil would cause social disaster, and where no allotments in lieu of fuel rights had been made, fuel riots often took place in the village during the winters immediately following the enclosure.

[1] In 1801 a general Act (41 Geo. III, c. 109) to simplify and regularize enclosures was passed. Several clauses relating to allotments for the poor taken from previous private Acts were embodied in it, to hold good in all cases where the special Act did not expressly provide to the contrary. This appears to have thrown upon the promoters of Enclosure Acts the onus of excluding the poor from participating in the allotment of the common lands and wastes, relieving the latter from making definite claims unless the special Act expressly excluded them. These provisions were largely the result of the influence of Arthur Young and Sir John Sinclair. Later Acts strengthened this provision.

Poor Allotments. As the enclosure of the village lands proceeded during the early part of the nineteenth century, it was found that the small plots given in lieu of fuel rights, often meagre, unfertile, and inaccessible, did not satisfy the needs of the poor of the various parishes. So in 1819 an Act (59 Geo. III, c. 12) was passed which, after referring to the Poor Law of 1601 making it the duty of churchwardens and overseers to set poor people to work, gave them the authority, with the consent of the inhabitants, to purchase or hire any plot of land up to twenty acres in extent, and to let it to such people as were poor and unemployed. This Act also gave churchwardens and overseers the power to enclose waste land, provided that they obtained the consent of the lord of the manor and of the major part of the inhabitants, to improve it, and to let it to the poor people. Thus was established the connexion between allotments and the Poor Law which was to be continued for many years.

A later Act, known as the Crown Lands Allotment Act (2 Will. IV, c. 42), gave parish officials the same right to enclose portions of waste on the Crown Lands, subject to the consent of the Treasury. It also dealt with cases of allotments in lieu of fuel rights, requiring the Trustees to let the lands on a yearly occupation 'to industrious labourers and journeymen of good character'. This Act extended the limit up to which poor law officials could hire land to fifty acres.

On the reorganization of the law and administration of poor relief another Act (5 & 6 Will. IV, c. 69) gave all the authority in regard to allotments, previously possessed by parish officers, to the Boards of Guardians, subject to the control of the Poor Law Commissioners (now the Local Government Board). But it was decided in two cases which came before the Courts that the Act did not transfer the legal estate from the churchwardens and overseers to the Guardians, consequently these bodies never used the powers given to them.

Field Gardens. The General Enclosure Act of 1845 also developed the connexion between enclosure and allotments.

It provided for the grant of a plot of land for 'field gardens' for the labouring poor of a parish on an enclosure being made, and also for the management of these field gardens by the incumbent of the parish, the churchwardens, and other persons to be elected, this body to be styled 'the Allotment Wardens'. When an allotment for this purpose was made, the Enclosure Commissioners (now the Board of Agriculture) must report the reasons to the House of Commons. Thus, in the last decade of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries the connexion between enclosures, poor relief, and allotments became very close indeed.

Later Developments of these Laws. The law relating to the holding of allotments under the Enclosure Acts and the Poor Laws has been considerably changed. The duties, powers, and liabilities of churchwardens and overseers in regard to the holding or management of parish property (other than ecclesiastical property), and the holding and management of village greens and allotments, were transferred to the Parish Council by the Local Government Act of 1894. Where no Parish Council exists the legal interest in all parish property is vested in the chairman of the Parish Meeting and overseers, and the duty of appointing all Allotment Wardens or Committees of Management is transferred to the Parish Council or the chairman of the Parish Meeting, &c., as the case may be. Further, any Trustees who hold any property for the purpose of allotments or for the benefit of the inhabitants of a rural parish *may*, with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, transfer such property to the Parish Council (or Parish Meeting), or other nominees. Powers possessed by the Boards of Guardians were transferred to the District Councils.

Cessation of Public Action. Except for the working of the 'field gardens' clause of the General Enclosure Act, 1845 (8 & 9 Vict., c. 118), there was a cessation of public action in the provision of allotments from 1832 till 1882. Meanwhile the Poor Law Commission of 1832 had collected information on the question. The evidence of the results of

letting land to labourers was somewhat conflicting, although the Commissioners were of opinion that when land was let at a rent of £8 per acre the labourer could sometimes obtain a profit of £2 14*s.* from the cultivation of a quarter of an acre, or, not counting the labourer's own work as cost, he could reap a profit of £4 4*s.* 6*d.*[1]

The Poor Law Commissioners decided that:

(*a*) The amount of land which a labourer can cultivate is usually small: less than one half acre.

(*b*) The system of letting land by private individuals is beneficial, but the system of letting land by parish officials is rarely successful.

(*c*) The occupation of land by labourers is beneficial to lessor as well as to occupier.

On this they decided that the provision of land for labourers should be left to the inherent tendency in the parties concerned to seek their own economic interests. 'But since it appears that land may be let to labourers on profitable terms, the necessity for a public inquiry on these points seems to be at an end. A practice which is beneficial to both parties, and is known to be so, may be left to the care of their own self-interest. The evidence shows that it is rapidly extending, and we have no doubt that as its utility is perceived, it will spread still more rapidly, and that experience will show, if it has not already shown, on what mutual stipulations it can best be effected.'[2] But the interests of the individual are not entirely confined to economic matters, and it was to be found later that in spite of the possible profit to landowners from letting land to labourers, other interests intervened to prevent the allotment system from spreading so rapidly as the Commissioners expected.

Private Provision of Allotments. There was a considerable extension of the amount of land under allotments from 1850

[1] This was where the farmer let the land to labourers, and the cost of ploughing once was included in the rent.

[2] *The Report of the Poor Law Commission*, 1834.

onwards.[1] Owners of small fields took advantage of the demand for land and let them in small parcels at increased rents. Some owners of large estates also provided field gardens, or larger allotments for the labourers. The rents were generally considerably higher, sometimes 300 per cent., than the rent of farm land of equal fertility and convenience. The Labourers' Union movement of the 'seventies also gave a considerable fillip to the extension of the allotment system. In some localities the official programme included the obtaining of land for allotments, although the National Union found it difficult to decide whether or not to make the expression of the demand for allotments an item in its programme, and Joseph Arch himself was always against this policy. The inclusion of the demand for allotments in the policy of the Union was largely fostered by middle-class supporters.

Allotments on Charity Land. On account of the discussion of the labourer's lot which arose out of the various actions of the Union many landlords showed an increased willingness to provide land for villagers, and the Allotments Extension Act of 1882 was the direct outcome of the activities of the Union and its political supporters.

This Act requires that Trustees holding land for the benefit of the poor of a parish should set apart a suitable portion for allotments. On the petition of four labourers eligible for land the Charity Commissioners may enforce the Act. But on the showing of just cause they may also grant to the Trustees a certificate declaring that the land is unfit for allotments; and if it be shown that the division of one portion of the land owned by the Trustees would injure the other portion, they need not provide allotments. This Act was a clear contradiction of the dictum of the economists who wrote the report of the Poor Law Commission in 1834, and it was immediately followed by a considerable increase in the amount of land available for allotments.

[1] In 1867 there were over 900 allotments on the Duke of Marlborough's Oxfordshire estates. See Ouslow, *Landlords and Allotments.*

Allotments provided by Public Action.

(*a*) From 1887 to 1907. Under the Allotment Acts of 1887 and 1890, and the Local Government Act of 1894, it was the duty of any urban or rural sanitary authority, on a representation being made to them, in writing, by any six parliamentary electors or ratepayers resident, in the case of an urban district, in that district, or, in the case of a rural district, within some parish thereof, to take such representation into consideration; and if they were of opinion, after inquiry, that there was a demand for allotments for the labouring population they might acquire land for such purpose by purchase or hire, by voluntary agreement with the owner, and let it in allotments to the labouring population of the district or parish. After 1894 the Parish Council could also make representations to the District Council on the matter of allotments. It was stipulated that no land should be acquired except at a reasonable rent and on reasonable conditions, and the rents obtained must cover all expenses.

Under the Allotments Act of 1890 the County Council must have a Standing Committee on allotments, and, in case the sanitary authorities failed to obtain land by voluntary agreement, it was the duty of the Allotments Committee to institute a public inquiry. If after inquiry it was found that a demand for land existed, but unreasonable conditions were made for the sale or letting of the land, the County Council could put into effect the compulsory clauses of the Land Clauses Consolidation Acts. If the County Council failed to act, the Parish or District Council[1] might apply to the Local Government Board to make an order, but any order of this Board overriding a decision of the County Council must be admitted by Parliament.

The District Council might also submit a scheme for the provision of common pasture to the County Council, who might authorize them to put it into effect. The District Council was also empowered to borrow money for the

[1] After 1894.

purpose of acquiring, improving, or adapting land. On the failure of a District Council to act after representations had been made by electors, ratepayers, or Parish Council, the County Council could, after inquiry, transfer the powers of the District Council to themselves. But in this case all the powers of management of the allotments became vested in the Parish Council.

Under the Local Government Act, 1894, the Parish Council had power to provide land for allotments so long as they could hire it by voluntary agreement. If unable to hire they must apply to the County Council to make an order, which was subject to the confirmation of the Local Government Board. Land hired by voluntary agreement could be let in allotments exceeding one acre to one person, but if hired compulsorily not more than one acre of arable and three acres of pasture, or four acres of pasture would be let to one person. On land voluntarily hired, a stable, cow-house, or barn might be erected by the tenant; but in case of compulsory hiring the erection of these buildings is forbidden.

Previous to 1908 the District or Parish Council which had provided allotments could, with the consent of the Local Government Board, make general regulations for the use of allotments. These usually contained four general conditions:

(1) The tenant should keep the allotment free from weeds, manure it, and otherwise maintain it in a proper state of cultivation.
(2) He should not plant any trees or shrubs so as to be injurious to any adjacent allotment.
(3) He should keep every hedge that shall form part of the allotment properly cut and trimmed.
(4) He should not deposit weeds, manure, or any other obstruction upon any road or path, nor cause any nuisance or annoyance to the holder of any other allotment.

These four general conditions form the foundation for the rules governing other allotments, both privately and publicly

provided.[1] In some cases it has been found necessary by public authorities, allotment societies, and landowners to take charge of all fences, both for the welfare of the fence and to avoid annoyance to the general body of tenants often caused by the failure of one holder to take proper care of his portion. In such cases the cost of attending to fences is apportioned to each tenant in addition to the rent. This provision has much in its favour alike from the landowner's and the allotment holder's point of view.

(*b*) Since 1907. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1907 made amendments to the Allotments Act of 1887 and 1890, and the Act of 1908 repeals and consolidates all three. When land can be obtained under reasonable conditions, and at a reasonable rent, by voluntary hiring, it is still the duty of local councils to make provision for allotments 'to let to persons belonging to the labouring population resident in the borough, district, or parish who desire to take them'. All expenses must be covered out of the rent charged. The Council may erect and adapt buildings, provided that they do not erect more than one house on each allotment, nor any house on less than one acre of land.

The local councils may not provide more than five acres of land, in one or several allotments, for any person, without the consent of the County Council, and they are not bound to provide more than one acre for one applicant. They may let land to Co-operative Societies, but no individual tenant may sublet land which he holds as an allotment. In case a council fails to let all the land they hold as allotments, they may let it in such a way as will bring the best rent,

[1] Under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, the Board of Agriculture is now the central authority for all allotments, except as regards questions of finance, which remain under the jurisdiction of the Local Government Board. The Board of Agriculture now sanctions rules and regulations regarding allotments. A set of model rules and other forms for use by local authorities is published in the *Annual Report of the Land Division*, 1908, pp. 147–63 (Cd. 4895, 1909). Since 1908, only one set of rules appears to have been approved for an Oxfordshire parish.

subject to being able to retake possession within twelve months, if desired. They may also appoint Allotment Wardens and delegate powers to them, and they have power to remove their appointees. Existing Trustees or Allotment Wardens may transfer their land and powers to a council; and should a local council fail to provide land for allotments, the County Council may do so. Further, the Board of Agriculture may, if found necessary, transfer the powers of the Councils to the Small Holdings Commissioners.

CHAPTER III

ALLOTMENTS IN OXFORDSHIRE

In the early part of 1914 about 250 inquiry forms as to allotments were sent to the rate collectors in the various parishes of the Poor Law Unions in Oxfordshire, and 178 were filled in and returned; a supplementary list was obtained by personal visits to several parts of the county.[1] The returns and list give information as to the ownership and tenure of allotments at the present time.

The volumes of evidence taken by the Poor Law Commission of 1834 do not contain any references to allotments provided by parochial Poor Law officials in Oxfordshire, and it thus appears that the authorities had not taken advantages of this means of providing relief, although allotments had been established in neighbouring counties. But the class of Fuel Allotments is still a numerous one. The Parish Councils are quite often described as the owners of the land, but as these bodies have never been authorized to purchase lands, and as the lands belonging to other charities are generally administered by special trustees, it must be that the property said to be owned by the Parish Council was at some time given to the poor of the parish in lieu of other rights, and many instances can be found where the origin of the allotments is quite certain. The 'Poor of Hook Norton' are described as the owners of a plot of land

[1] Unions which consist mainly of Oxfordshire parishes, with the number of such parishes, are as follows: Banbury, 35; Bicester, 37; Chipping Norton, 32; Headington, 20; Henley, 22; Thame, 29; Witney, 41; Woodstock, 37. Some of these, e.g. Banbury, contain parishes in other counties, and some parishes in Oxfordshire are included in Unions mainly consisting of parishes in other counties. None of these parishes was circularized.

in that parish, and the 'Heath Trustees' are the administrators. At Brize Norton the 'Trustees of Parish Allotments', and at Wilcote the 'Trustees of Poor's Allotments' have charge of a considerable acreage of land. At Clanfield the Parish Council are said to own over ten acres of land which the parish must have obtained by grant. Indeed, there are twenty-five instances where civil parishes appear as owners of groups of allotments. In eleven instances the plots are still let by the Trustees, in the other instances control has passed into the hands of the Parish Council.

Under the General Enclosure Act of 1845, twenty enclosures in forty parishes occurred in the county between 1846 and 1866. In several of these parishes the Council now owns and lets land which came to their parish through the operation of the allotment provisions of the Act.

There are nineteen instances in which the property of village charities is divided into allotments. These charities have often been founded for the provision of bread, clothing, or fuel for the poor of the parish, and sometimes also for the assistance of education, or other special purposes. 'The Trustees of Cropredy Bells' own fourteen acres of allotments at Mollington, and at Sibford the 'Charity Trustees' own over thirty-six acr The existence of most of these groups of allotments is due to the working of the Allotments Extension Act of 1882.

Of the allotments established by public authorities the thirty-seven groups let by Parish Councils are the most important.[1] It appears that Rural District Councils have made little, if any, use of their powers to provide land for

[1] Particulars of the provision of land for allotments by public authorities, as given in the official reports, are as follows:

	Owned.	Leased.	Total.
	a. r. p.	a. r. p.	a. r. p.
Town Councils (3)	26 3 17	59 2 26	8c 2 3
Urban District Councils	—	—	—
Parish Councils (50)	211 1 16	656 0 23	867 1 39
Total	238 0 33	715 3 9	954 0 2

allotments in Oxfordshire. Although Rural District Councils appear as the owners and lessors of three groups of allotments, these [illegible] to have been acquired otherwise than by direct application of the allotments clauses of the Local Government Acts. When enclosures were effected, grants of lands for stone or gravel quarries were made to some parishes, and were passed on to the Highway Authorities, till finally they came under the control of the Rural District Councils. This appears to have been the origin of the land these bodies now let as allotments.

Borough Councils appear as the owners of five, and as the lessors of nine groups of allotments. Although some of these groups contain a considerable acreage, the allotments themselves are small, being garden allotments on the outskirts of the town.

The County Council appears to be the owner of the part of the allotment land let by the Parish Council at Hornton, and the immediate lessor of two groups of allotments at Garsington and Stanton Harcourt. So the powers of this authority in respect to allotments have been used only rarely.

The most important group of allotment providers are private owners of land. In this class there are 162 groups of allotments. Amongst these the largest are the Duke of Marlborough with nine; Vernon J. Watney, Esq., with four; the Lord Bertie with four; the Earl of Ducie with three, and the Earl of Jersey with three groups respectively. The Duke of Marlborough is much the most important owner of allotments in the county.

Ecclesiastical authorities also constitute an important group of owners of allotments. Clergy, owning both glebe and private land, but mostly glebe, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, ecclesiastical parishes and churchwardens, all own and lease land for this purpose. A considerable number of allotments are situated on glebe land, but in cases where a clergyman is named as the owner of land, it is not always possible to distinguish between glebe and private property. The land owned by churchwardens is usually, though not

always, in small quantities. In this case, again, the origin of the property seems to have been in the enclosure of the common fields, when allotments were made to the church-wardens to provide a salary for the sexton or clerk, and sometimes, as at Handboro .gh, the land is said to be the property of the clerk. Altogether thirty-seven groups of allotments are owned by ecclesiastical authorities.

Colleges, hospitals, and schools own thirty parcels of land let as allotments. Sometimes they let directly through the administrative officials, such as the Bursar of the College, or the Treasurer of the Hospital, but often through agents. In some villages it is found that a College owns two fields of allotments, one let by the Bursar, the other through a local authority. The same is true of some private owners. This is a curious state of affairs, and it might be questioned whether a simplification could not advantageously be made by the owner in question, by putting both groups of allotments under a single control.

An example of the multiplicity of ownership and control of allotments is found at Deddington. The particulars are as follows:

Owner.	*Agent or Lessor.*
Rev. T. Boniface.	Himself.
Duns Tew Friendly Society.	Officer.
E. J. Horton.	H. C. Mason.
Ecclesiastical Commissioners.	Parish Council.
Christ Church College.	Parish Council.
Christ Church College.	Treasurer.

This is not the only instance of many owners and administrators of allotments in one parish.

Of the four Allotment Associations, through which the tenants obtain their land by mutual effort, three operate in towns, and one in a village. Oxfordshire has never been prominent in the organization of societies for mutual aid so it is not surprising that these are few in number.[1] But to the specific Allotment Societies must be added two

[1] There are six Allotment Associations in Oxford City; some of their land, however, is in Berkshire.

Friendly Benefit Societies which provide land; and where village Friendly Societies, whether purely local or branches of national organizations, purchase land primarily for a safe investment of their funds, the provision of allotments for their members and for the villagers is often a strong secondary object.

The provision of potato-land or cow-pastures for labourers by their employers has never been a common condition of employment in Oxfordshire as it is in some other counties. In 1886 about one-seventeenth of the labourers in the county were supplied with potato-land, but no cow-runs were provided,[1] and since that time the practice of granting potato-land, except in isolated instances, seems to have disappeared. From the returns sent in it has been found that three farmers provide allotments for labourers, not confining tenancy to their own employees, but subletting portions of their farms.

There are several instances of common pastures within the county. At Chipping Norton there is a large common-pasture of eighty-one stints used by tradesmen of the town. In the extreme south of the county there is a considerable acreage of common waste which supplies the villagers with some litter and fuel, and a little rough pasturage for stock. But one good instance of common pasturage is to be found at Tetsworth. Under the control of the 'Hayward's Trustees' is a common pasture rated by stints as follows:

No. of Cattle.	*Estimated Area.*	*Rateable Value.*
	a. r. p.	£ s. d.
3 cows	4 1 13	6 15 0
2 cows	2 3 22	4 10 0
3 cows	4 1 13	6 15 0
1 cow	1 1 31	2 5 0
2 cows	2 3 22	4 10 0
Total 11 cows	15 3 21	£24 15 0

The power of Public Authorities to provide common pasture seems to have been entirely neglected.

[1] *Return of Allotments, &c.*, Cd. 4848, 1886, pp. 8–9.

So far as is known there is only one modern instance of 'squatting' as a means of obtaining land for allotments. Some years ago a recreation ground was provided for the parish of Curbridge (presumably in the process of enclosure), of which the Duke of Marlborough is Lord of the Manor. The ground was unused and allowed to go waste, and eventually a number of people began to cultivate small plots till there were over twenty occupiers cultivating the whole five acres. A Local Government Board Inquiry was held after complaint had been made by other villagers, but the squatters were not dispossessed, and at the present time both the original squatters and their successors freely barter or sell the little plots they have been used to cultivate.

The methods of providing allotments in these 212 parishes may now be summarized.

SUMMARY OF METHODS OF PROVIDING ALLOTMENTS.

	Number.	*Per cent. of Total.*
Parishes for which information is available	212	
Parishes containing allotments	166	78·30
Groups of Allotments	321	
Held under:		
Private Owners[1]	163	50·78
Clergy	36	11·22
Institutions	27	8·42
Mutual Aid Societies	7	2·15
Allotment Wardens and Trustees	12	3·74
Charity Trustees	21	6·55
Parish Councils	37	11·53
Other Public Authorities	15	4·67
Farmers (subletting)	3	·94
		100·00

Thus it is clear that more than half of the allotments in these groups have been provided without necessity for public action, and with a minimum of public obligation. The powers of public authorities to use compulsion for the provision of allotments for labourers have mostly lain dormant,

[1] Land leased by Churchwardens and Ecclesiastical Commissioners included.

but for all that their existence has sometimes been of benefit. In 1908 four Parish Councils made representations to the County Council that they had been unable to obtain suitable land for allotments by agreement, and requested that authority to put in force their compulsory powers in order to obtain the necessary land. One order was made in 1909, but after inquiry by the Board of Agriculture confirmation was refused. The application for an order, or the resulting inquiry, is often sufficient to bring about a voluntary agreement, and, more particularly, it happens that an order by the Council, without the confirmation of the Board of Agriculture, has this result. In the four cases mentioned the demand is now fully satisfied.

CLASSIFICATION AND NUMBER OF OWNERS OF ALLOTMENTS.

Group I. Parishes from which returns were obtained on forms sent out to the local rate collectors.

Number of Parishes	178
Number of Parishes containing allotments	139
Number of groups of allotments	269

	No. of owners.
Private owners	137
Clergy, including glebe land and land other than glebe	29
Ecclesiastical Commissioners and ecclesiastical parishes, land other than glebe	6
Hospitals, Schools, and Colleges	26
Trustees of general charities	18
Friendly Societies	2
Civil parishes, including poor allotments	21
Rural District Councils	3
Borough Corporations	5
County Council	1
Crown	2
Total number of owners	250

Group II. Information collected by personal inquiry.

Number of parishes or towns	35
Number of parishes containing allotments	28
Number of groups of allotments	53

	No. of owners.
Private owners	29
Clergy	6
Other ecclesiastical officials	2
Allotment Trustees	4
Charity Trustees	1
Schools and Colleges	2
Total number of owners	44

ANALYSIS OF METHODS OF PROVIDING LAND FOR ALLOTMENTS.

Groups of allotments let by private owners, their agents, Institutions, Public Authorities, &c.

(Group I. 269 groups of allotments.)

	No. of groups.
Let directly by private owners	44
Let by agents of private owners	81
Let directly by clergy	21
Let by agents for clergy (including two groups let by churchwardens)	11
Let directly by Institutions	15
Let by agents for Institutions	10
Let by Friendly Societies (or officials)	3
Let by Allotment Societies	3
Let by Allotment Trustees	7
Let by Allotment Wardens	1
Let by Charity Trustees	21
Let by Parish Councils	36
Let by District Councils	3
Let by Borough Councils	7
Let by County Council	2
Let by Agents for Crown	1
Sublet by Farmers from their farms	3

(Group II. 53 groups of allotments.)

		No. of groups.
Let by:	Owners	14
	Agents for Owners	21
	Clergy	4
	Agents for Clergy	3
	Allotment Trustees	4
	Parish Council	1
	Borough Councils	3
	Institutions	2
	Allotment Association	1

Although the Assistant Commissioners who visited Oxfordshire for the purpose of the inquiry into the administration of the Poor Laws in 1832 failed to leave any record of finding

Poor Law Allotments within the county they did at least notice 'that gardens are generally small, and sometimes there are none at all, though at other places they are numerous and large'. These conditions still persist. The reasons for these variations would have to be sought in the individual history of each parish, but it is obvious that the number and size of gardens considerably affects the demand for allotments. Testimony to this fact was given on one of the Inquiry Returns when it was recorded of Chilworth that there are 'very large gardens' and 'no allotments'. There is no written record of the extension of the allotment system in the county between 1832 and 1873, but the Returns of Allotments collected in the latter year show that there were 9,088 'garden allotments detached from cottages' of an average size of about a quarter of an acre, covering 2,360 acres of land. This number amounts to 3·75 per cent. of all the allotments in England. Some of these allotments may have existed prior to 1832, because, as has been seen, a number of groups of allotments are owned by the poor of various parishes, to whom they were given in lieu of fuel rights, and the Trustees of these plots were required by the Act of 1819 (2 Will. IV, c. 42) to let such lands on a yearly occupation 'to industrious labourers and journeymen of good character'. It is suggested that there may have been between 600 and 800 of these allotments in existence between 1825 and 1840, so that over 8,000 allotments must have been provided by private owners of land during this period. In other counties the country clergy did much to provide garden allotments for the assistance of agricultural labourers, and probably this was true in Oxfordshire; whilst from 1873 to 1890, during the whole of the period when the farm labourers were agitating for an improvement in their conditions, the number of allotments in the county steadily grew.

In the return of the number of allotments, cow-runs, and allowances of potato ground published in 1886,[1] it was stated that there were 17,000 agricultural labourers and farm servants in Oxfordshire,[2] of whom 1,061 had ground

[1] Cd. 4848. [2] Census of 1881.

for potatoes, but there were no cow-runs and no agreements to give labourers a definite quantity of land. There were 14,062 allotments of less than one acre, and 644 between one and four acres in extent in the county. These numbers may be classified according to size.

Under one-eighth of an acre	4,560	
Of one-eighth and under one quarter of an acre	4,766	
Of one quarter and under 1 acre	4,736	
		14,062
Allotments of 1 to 4 acres in extent:		
Arable	571	
Pasture	62	
Arable and Pasture	11	
		644
Total number of allotments		14,706

Of this number 12,920 were held on a yearly tenancy, and 1,786 on a shorter term.

In addition to these there were 450 allotments let to railwaymen by the companies for which they were working. Only 86 of these exceeded one-eighth of an acre, and they were all let on a yearly tenancy. There were some 2,512 garden allotments attached to cottages, none of which were rent free. The rents averaged £3 19*s.* 6*d.* per acre, and the length of the tenancies varied considerably. These were the conditions:

Weekly	336
Monthly	353
Quarterly or Half-yearly	790
Yearly	1,008
Other	25
Total	2,512

A few garden allotments attached to cottages were also let by railway companies to their employees.

In 1887 information as to the number and acreage of allotments was collected by the Agricultural Department of the Privy Council, and the figures were published in units of the various Poor Law Unions. The following table deals with those Unions from which information has been obtained during the present inquiry:

RETURN OF ALLOTMENTS AND FIELD GARDENS DETACHED FROM COTTAGES, 1887.[1]

Unions with parishes mainly in Oxfordshire.[2]	*Under ⅛ acre.*	*Of ⅛ and under ¼ acre.*	*Of ¼ and under 1 acre.*	*Of 1 to 4 acres inclusive.*			*Distance from Cottages.*		
				Arable.	*Pasture.*	*Arable and Pasture.*	*Not over ½ mile.*	*Exceeding ½ but not exceeding 1 mile.*	*Exceeding 1 mile.*
Banbury . . .	1,222	850	876	80	1	5	2,136	661	237
Bicester . . .	462	434	645	146	—	2	1,334	325	30
Chipping Norton .	329	632	438	49	10	3	1,551	322	88
Headington . . .	234	510	304	54	35	1	824	295	19
Henley	589	253	59	38	2	—	847	48	46
Thame	573	641	481	49	—	1	1,569	146	30
Witney	828	1,001	822	94	7	—	1,929	796	27
Woodstock . . .	213	453	1,030	99	9	—	1,661	143	—
	4,450	4,774	4,655	609	64	12	11,851	2,736	477
Total for England and Wales	131,207	116,355	103,915	18,239	11,782	5,005	316,288	56,405	13,762

[1] Cd. 4974, 1887.

[2] Some of these Unions include parishes in other counties, so that no exact comparisons can be made.

These figures indicate some increase in allotments just at this time. The total number in the eight Unions which, while they include parishes in other counties, do not include all the parishes of Oxfordshire, was 14,564.

The number in various classes is as follows:

Under one-eighth of an acre	4,450
Of one-eighth and under one-quarter of an acre	4,774
Of one-quarter and under one acre	4,655
Of one to four acres: arable	609
„ „ pasture	64
„ „ arable and pasture	12
	14,564

Following closely upon this Return very detailed statistics of the number and size of allotments and small holdings in each village are obtainable for 1889.[1] The tables are appended, but the chief facts may be stated by giving the number of allotments in each class.

Under one-quarter of an acre	11,453
Of one-quarter and under one acre	6,494
	17,947

The progress from 1800 to 1890 may now be stated.

1800 (fuel allotments, maximum)	800
1873	9,088
1886 (with garden allotments attached to cottages, 15,156)	14,706
1889	17,947

This shows very clearly the expansion of allotments between 1873 and 1890, and it was during this period that the great bulk of the land now privately leased to labourers was distributed as allotments. Many changes occurred; fields a long way from the village were relinquished; others, wet or heavy working, or highly rented, again returned to farms, but in many cases the land now let as allotments has been let in this way for nearly forty years. It was inevitable that experiments should be made, it was also inevitable that in some instances advantage should be taken of the labourer's

[1] Cd. 6144, 1890.

keen demand for land; thus some failures were due to the human necessity for experiments, others were merited by the originators of the schemes. That some fields were 'run down' and abandoned by labourers who had been enthusiastic applicants for allotments is as much a reflection on the cupidity of the owner as on the honesty or industry of the labourers.

The period of the creation of allotments by Local Government bodies legally begins in 1887 with the passage of the Local Government Act of that year, but the most important development of the law was the creation of the Parish Councils, with power to provide allotments, in 1894, and as the latest returns of allotments were collected in 1889 the next year is a convenient point from which to judge the effect of the granting of public powers to provide land for labourers. An attempt to show the trend of the movement under the régime of the public authorities will be made, but it is not possible to provide any figures giving a complete comparison of the conditions existing in 1889 and those of 1914.

Information is available for 212 parishes, and the most striking fact is that fourteen parishes which had allotments in 1889 had lost them in 1914, and that fourteen which had no allotments in the earlier year had obtained them by 1914. Thus the number of parishes in this group, distributed over all parts of the county, which contain allotments is now exactly the same as twenty-five years ago. In other parishes there are indications of shrinkages and some indications of increases, but it is difficult to state the magnitude of these movements in every case.

The real increase is estimated to be about 5 per cent.; the increase due to the action of Parish Councils being partly counterbalanced by the relinquishment or withdrawal of land privately leased. Still, there is no evidence that the action of the Parish Councils was unnecessary or uneconomical. Indeed, the contrary is generally true. The action of these bodies with the guarantees of rent and permanency of tenure which they were able to offer to owners opened up

land for allotments of a superior character, or greater convenience, than the labourers had previously been able to command, so the dearer or more inconvenient land was returned to farms, or more often let in one lot to the village carrier or haulier. It is important to note that most of the land controlled by Public Authorities other than Parish Councils is let as gardens, mostly to urban workers. There has been a constantly increasing demand for these gardens for many years, and the smallest plots of unused building land are often put under cultivation by men who are eager to use their leisure time in providing their families with vegetables. The demand for village allotments of the garden type is also constant and strong, but the demand for field allotments varies with the conditions of employment, and may fluctuate with the number of labourers within the parish, favourable or inclement seasons, the yield of crops, or the prices of farm products.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEMAND FOR ALLOTMENTS

For the purpose of any economic study allotments must be divided into two classes:

(*a*) *Garden Allotments*, being plots of land up to one-fourth of an acre in size, detached from cottages, and not in any way connected with any particular cottages.

(*b*) *Field Allotments*, being plots of land between one-fourth of an acre and five acres in size, not being attached to cottages.

The legal definition of an allotment contained in the Allotments Compensation Act, 1887, is 'any parcel of land of not more than two acres in extent, held by a tenant under a landlord, and cultivated as a garden or a farm, or partly as a garden and partly as a farm'. But more recent Acts have extended the limit to five acres. This definition covers both classes as divided above.

As in 1873 and 1889, the majority of allotments in Oxfordshire are of the garden type and small in area. The size of the plots generally ranges between ten and forty poles, the average number per acre being six or eight. This type is much better distributed over the country than the larger type intended for field cultivation. Further, they are occupied by all classes of workers, both urban and rural.

The 321 groups of allotments already recorded in 166 parishes were distributed as follows:

99	parishes	had	1		group(s) each	99
31	"	"	2		" "	62
14	"	"	3		" "	42
5	"	"	4		" "	20
17	"	"	5	or more	" "	98
						321

In the majority of cases the single groups may be classed as garden allotments, and there are usually one or more groups of this type in villages possessing several groups.

The greater portion of the field allotments are situated in the lighter arable districts of the county where employment is slack during the winter season, and where the soil can be worked by the labourer at almost any time. There are some striking instances of this on the stone-brash area in the centre of the county. At Stonesfield there are five groups of allotments covering over 86 acres; at Hailey there are ten groups covering nearly 100 acres; and at Wootton there are seven groups covering nearly 80 acres. These are almost purely agricultural parishes, and the allotments are important factors in the economic life of the farm labourers. The soil is light and dry, yet yields good crops of barley and potatoes which are of the utmost value to the labourer in feeding his family and his pigs; and as the land can be worked during the slack time from November to February, considerable economic benefit is obtained.

At Stonesfield the material exists for a good study of the demand for allotments over a number of years, and it is all the more valuable since the population has remained almost stationary during the period. In 1891 the population numbered 517; in 1901, 497; and in 1911, 494. The chief fact which emerges is that the allotment of one acre is too large for the man who is regularly employed as a labourer, whilst it is not large enough for the man who is aspiring to independence. Consequently there has been an increase in the number of allotments of less than one acre in extent, and a decrease in those of one acre. The tables given in the appendix show this, and also serve to show how steady has been the demand for allotments in a large agricultural parish.[1]

There have been several notable movements in the tenancies, a marked one being the increase of allotments of half

[1] Appendix III.

an acre in extent. In 1895 eleven allotments of this size were let to tenants, and in 1909 the number of these had increased to twenty-six. Many of these new allotments were made by dividing those of one and two acres in extent. In 1895 there were thirteen allotments of one acre, and in 1909 only seven. Of those two acres in extent there were eight in 1895 and only seven in 1909, but the number of holdings of three acres dropped from two to one during the same period, so there was a greater diminution of the two acre plots than at first appears. The greater subdivision of the smaller allotments rather indicates that one acre proved too much for the labourers who cultivated them, while other labourers saw the advantage of an allotment of half an acre in extent.

The number of allotments steadily increased from 1899 to 1909, but during the period 1898–1900 there was a small decrease in the total number of tenants, while from 1900 to 1905 the number had again increased. It remained stable till 1908, and has since diminished. The one outstanding fact is that all the allotments of four acres or upwards have retained their original area from 1895 up to the present time.

Some duplication of allotments in the hands of one tenant has existed ever since 1895, but the duplication has been more important since 1904. In that year seven tenants held fourteen divisions, 28 a. 2 r. 35 p. in extent, with an average of four acres each; thus the duplication was of the larger allotments. By 1911 seven tenants held sixteen allotments containing 28 a. 3 r. 33 p. In this year the larger number of duplicates were allotments of half an acre, or of one acre and less than two. This points to a slackening of the demand for the smaller allotments, which, according to the villagers, is due to emigration on the part of the labourer cultivators. This might well be the case, because even now several of the allotment holders are single labourers, who may be expected to leave the village during any period of unemployment, or on discovering better prospects elsewhere. Another reason for the slackening of demand for the smaller allotments may be found in the increasing security of

employment and slightly increasing wages. due to the migration and emigration of the younger labourers. But whatever the cause it is clear that the Council will find some difficulty in letting its allotments in the future, unless some of the existing allotment cultivators are willing to advance into the ranks of small holders. This a few of them seem inclined to do, and at the Michaelmas Rent Audit of 1913 the Council had sufficient applicants for the vacant plots, and was in the happy position of having not one penny of arrears of rent recorded in books.

In some places there is evidence of a declining demand for allotments, but this has not yet become general. In many cases the return of allotment land to ordinary field cultivation is found to be due to the unfavourable situation or nature of the land itself.

At Handborough there is a striking evidence of the influence of convenience and suitability on the demand. On the Churchwardens' allotments, situated between the two parts of the village, on gravel subsoil, there are forty-three tenants on 7¾ acres. The allotments adjoining these, supplied by the Duke of Marlborough, are also divided into small plots and fully occupied. Both these groups are well cultivated. But just over a mile from the village, adjoining the waste, the Trustees of Poor's Allotments have ten acres of clay land, badly drained, on which there are only five tenants where there used to be nine, and some of this land is poorly farmed. On the tract of heavy clay land running from Islip towards Bicester there is again evidence of the influence of intractable soil on allotment cultivation. On the side of the road leading into Oddington is a field of allotments practically deserted and under the dominance of 'twitch' grass. And at Ambrosden there is a large field of heavy land, from which it is difficult to remove the water, where many plots are practically, even if not legally deserted. Although the tenants are occupiers they are certainly not cultivators. But at Charlton-on-Otmoor there is a group of allotments close to the village on what seems to be an outcrop of stone-brash which are well divided and

fully cultivated. The Ambrosden group is some distance from the village, at Oddington the allotments are comparatively within easy reach. It must be remembered that the allotment cultivator who is also a farm labourer must work his ground in spare time, and is not able to take advantage of favourable weather conditions, so that he is very much dependent on the suitability of soil and situation of his land. At Tackley, too, the field of allotments situated at the greatest distance from the village is now let to two or three tenants. At Lower Heyford 'the Poor's Land' is all let to one tenant, and at Lewknor fifty acres have returned to a farm from allotment cultivation.

There is very little evidence of a general increase in allotments during recent years, although a comparison of the amount of land let by Parish Councils in 1908 and 1914 might lead to that conclusion.[1]

In 1908 thirty-one Councils had control of allotments, in 1914 the number had risen to forty. A number of Councils which let land in 1906 have increased the amount since, and

[1] INCREASE OF LAND UNDER CONTROL OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, 1908–1914.

	Parish Councils.	*Urban District Councils.*	*Town Councils.*	*Total.*
	a. r. p.	a. r. p.	a. r. p.	a. r. p.
Area of land held for Allotments:				
1908 . .	589 2 0	76 2 12	38 1 0	704 1 12
Area of land let as Allotments:				
1914 . . .	867 1 39	—	86 2 3	954 0 2
1908 . . .	575 3 6	75 3 32	38 1 0	689 3 38
Increase . .	291 2 33		48 1 3	264 0 4
No. of Allotment Holders:				
1914 . . .	1991	—	219, and 1 Assoc.	2,210, and 1 Assoc.
1908 . . .	1263	299	367	1,929
Increase . .	728			281, and 1 Assoc.

(Cd. 4895, 1909, and Cd. 7892, 1915.) See also details for each parish given in Appendix IV.

the number of tenants under many Councils has increased. There are also some instances of decreases. There are, however, several cases where the increase of land controlled by the Council has not increased allotments because they have been taken over from some other authority. Also, definite instances of allotment land returning to farm cultivation offset the increase of land made available by Council action. Such increase as has occurred has been strictly local. And the official statistics indicate that the demand for field allotments is diminishing.[1]

The decline in the number of allotments is in some instances due to a diminishing population, but much more to the increasing regularity of employment on farms which has been evident during the last few years. As the class of young and single labourers who used to cultivate an allotment to help to maintain themselves during the winter time has very largely disappeared, so the demand for allotments has diminished. And should wages advance in proportion to prices, leaving the labourer a small surplus over his previous expenditure, a further decrease may be expected.

But such decline as has appeared has only adjusted the supply of allotments to the more permanent demand. Now that an adjustment has been brought about in the rural labour market, what may be termed the 'emergency' allotments will disappear, if indeed they have not already done so. The demand for allotments on the part of married labourers, for the production of vegetables for a family and corn for a pig, will always remain so long as wages are com-

[1] DEMAND FOR ALLOTMENTS UNDER PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, 1908 AND 1914.

	Town Councils.		*Parish Councils.*	
	No. of Applicants.	*Acreage.* a. r. p.	*No. of Applicants.*	*Acreage.* a. r. p.
No. of applications for Allotments received:				
1908 . . .	75	7 0 4	133	133 3 36
1914 . . .	—	—	160	31 2 22
Unsatisfied demand for Allotments:				
1908 . . .	6	2 0	93	134 0 8
1914 . . .	12	2 3 1	40	24 2 0

paratively low. The curtailment of the number of pigs kept by cottagers due to the condemnation of pigsties near to cottages in a few villages, and the high price of feeding-stuffs, has to some extent discouraged allotment cultivation.[1] Also, it may be that the disappearance of local mills has somewhat discouraged the labourer in the cultivation of his allotment because he can no longer turn his wheat directly into bread for his family. But in spite of these adverse influences there will be a permanent demand for allotments for married labourers, especially in a county like Oxford where so many of these live in free cottages, unless the alternative system of higher wages and the provision of potato land is established. A system of farming which would make greater demands on the energy and time of the labourer, and provide the means of paying for the extra service, would radically alter the situation, and necessitate a reconsideration of the place of allotments in rural economy.

[1] The connexion between pig-keeping and allotment cultivation is very close indeed, and just over the border, in the county of Warwick, the closing of pigsties in one large village area put nearly the whole of the allotments out of cultivation. With rich pig-manure the fertility of the allotment is assured, and with a pig in the sty all the waste products of the allotment can be put to good use. Without a pig few, if any, labourers can afford to maintain the necessary fertility of an allotment. Indeed, the necessity of maintaining fertility and the difficulty of doing so is one of the chief reasons why labourers find it difficult to cultivate more than one half-acre of land.

CHAPTER V

CONDITIONS OF TENANCY

THE conditions of tenancy of allotments are generally easy. In some cases there are no expressed conditions and no rules regulating the use of the land, and where rules existed a few years ago they have in many cases become obsolete. Associations usually have a set of rules governing the use of allotments, but these are not often adhered to very closely. Such conditions as are enforced usually apply only to the payment of rent and the determination of tenancy.

In 1886 the allotments let on a yearly tenancy amounted to 85 per cent. of the total number. The remaining 15 per cent. are described only as 'other than yearly'. At the present time garden allotments are usually let on a quarterly or half-yearly tenancy, and field allotments on a half-yearly or yearly tenancy. The conditions vary somewhat according to the class of lessor. Public Authorities usually offer a half-yearly tenancy on garden allotments. Private owners appear to be the only lessors who offer quarterly, or half-yearly tenancies for the respective classes. This may to some extent be due to the greater control of tenants which a private owner can exercise, and also to the fact that he can allow for a greater margin of risk. Public Authorities a[illegible] Trustees of allotment lands cannot exercise such wid[illegible] cretion in letting land as is exercised by private owne[illegible] their agents, and they must provide every possible safeg[illegible] against risk, because of the possibility of criticism of their public trusteeship. Still, in Oxfordshire the majority of allotments of over one-quarter acre in extent are now let on a yearly tenancy, generally concluding at Michaelmas, while the majority of those under one rood are let on a half-yearly basis, the tenancies concluding at Michaelmas or Lady Day.

The rent of garden allotments is almost without exception paid quarterly, and the rent of field allotments is generally paid every six months, though occasionally it is collected quarterly. In some cases the rent of garden allotments is demanded in advance, and this applies more especially in the neighbourhood of small towns. At Bicester, for instance, the rent of some of the highly rented groups is demanded six months in advance. This condition always seems to be a source of annoyance to the tenants, especially where no custom of compensation for crops and other tenant-right has become fully recognized. Where a quarter's rent of garden allotments is demanded in advance the tenancy is usually quarterly, and as an outgoing tenant has no power of compelling the owner or incoming tenant to compensate him for loss of tenant-right short of recourse to the law, which is troublesome, if not expensive, it generally happens that he loses either the value of his crops, &c., or, failing to cultivate fully, loses the amount of the quarter's or half-year's rent. On the whole there seems to be little justification for this condition, for even in large centres very few losses of rents occur. It seems to be an arbitrary course which the owners were enabled to take because of the poor supply of allotment land.

The average rent for 4,732 acres of land in groups of allotments in 167 villages, according to the 'gross estimated rental' of the Rate Books of the various parishes, is £1 8*s.* 3*d.* per acre.[1]

The rent paid is usually from 1*s.* to 3*s.* per acre above the 'gross estimated rental' in the case of land let for £2 per acre and under, and the difference is somewhat greater when the rent rises about £2. But the real average rental is about £1 10*s.* per acre. Rents vary considerably; in the

[1] Area (approximate) . . . . . 4,732 acres.
Gross Estimated Rental (approximate) . . £6,699.
Rateable Value (approximate) . . . . £5,980.
Neither item has been obtained for *every* parish. In a few instances acreage is not included in Rate Books, sometimes rents do not appear, and some allotments are not separately rated.

case of field allotments they range between 10*s.* and 45*s.* per acre, the cheaper land often belonging to charities, but not infrequently to private owners. Some instances are:

		£	*s.*	*d.*
Over Norton	34½ acres	16	5	0
Lower Heyford	24 „	14	15	0
Somerton	over 90 „	71	5	0
Shipton-under-Wychwood . .	17 „	13	0	0
Dunsden	37½ „	22	12	10

The rent of field allotments provided by Parish Councils approximates very closely to 30*s.* per acre, though in one instance over £2, and in another less than £1, is charged.

The rents of garden allotments have a much wider range. At Witney the 'gross estimated rental' of one group is quoted at the rate of £8 an acre, and for another at the rate of £6. At Bicester one group realizes nearly £9 per acre, and rents only slightly lower are to be found near the other centres of population. Such rates do not often appear in villages, although at Bodicote the gross rental of about two acres of garden allotments is quoted at £12 15*s.*, and at Bloxham a small group comprising 1¼ acres lets for £7. A much more common rate in villages is about £3 per acre. This appears at several places, at Littlemore, Headington, Fulbrook, Deddington, and elsewhere. The general rate is about £3 per acre. Practically all garden allotments in the villages are let at rates between 3*d.* and 6*d.* per pole, which is the popular way of reckoning the rents of these plots.

For purposes of rates and taxes payable by an occupier, the local Councils are deemed to be the occupiers of allotments let by them. These charges are apportioned; they are deemed p t of and are recoverable as rents. There is nothing to prevent a Council making profit on its allotments. The main consideration in fixing rents must be the 'value of similar land in the neighbourhood'; and should the Council obtain land at a cheap rate, there is no obligation on them to let at the lowest possible rent.

The surplus rents received from field gardens set apart under Enclosure Awards under the Enclosure Act of 1845

must be applied to the improvement of the land, or to the hiring or purchasing of other fields for allotments or recreation grounds. No provision for the application of any surplus seems to have been made by the Small Holdings and Allotments Act.

Some Public Authorities allow a considerable discount for prompt payment of allotment rents. The Stonesfield Parish Council and the Handborough Churchwardens each allow a discount of 15 per cent. Some Allotment Associations also pursue the policy, but no instances have been found on allotments let by private owners. On the whole allotment rents are regularly and generally most promptly paid, but when failures to pay occur, recovery is very difficult, often impossible. As Public Authorities cannot make charges on the rates for allotments, they generally make provision for delinquencies, at the same time providing an incentive to pay promptly by giving a liberal discount. From the addition to rents intended to secure them against failures some Parish Councils have created a small reserve.

The rateable value of 4,732 acres of land amounts to £5,980, or £1 5*s.* 3*d.* per acre. This is a deduction from the gross rental of some 11 per cent. of the total. The rating regulations are not the same all over the county, but vary according to the scales adopted by the Assessment Committees of the various Poor Law Unions. The scale of these deductions varies, e. g. both the Henley and Chipping Norton Councils allow 5 per cent., while the Bicester Council allows a deduction of 7½ per cent. on 'agricultural land'.

Some special provisions have been made in the law of rating of allotments. By the Public Health Act of 1875, and the Allotments Rating Exemption Act of 1891, the occupier of an allotment is only liable to be rated on one-fourth proportion of the net annual value, or rateable value of the land, for the purposes of the general district rate in an urban district, or of a separate rate levied in respect of special expenses in a rural district. By the Agricultural Rates Act of 1896, and the Agricultural Rates Continuance Act, 1905, the occupier of agricultural land, which includes

allotments, in England, is liable to pay one-half only of the rate in the £ payable in respect of buildings or other hereditaments. This applies to all general rates for local purposes, but not for special purposes rates in connexion with Commissions of Sewers, Embankments, &c.

Thus allotments are rated on the same basis as other agricultural land in rural districts, whilst in urban districts they are rated on one-fourth of the net annual value. Buildings on allotments are occasionally rated, as for example, those at Thame, the property of Lord Bertie.

But even local rules are not strictly applied in connexion with the rating of allotments. It follows by no means that the deduction from the gross rental allowed by the local authority is always made. The actual deduction seems to be made arbitrarily by the person responsible for the assessment list, and numerous instances of this could be cited.

The rates of garden allotments are generally paid by the owner, or by the intermediary lessor when let by an Association or Public Authority. The tenants of field allotments under all classes of lessors occasionally pay rates on their individual plots, but it is the general practice for the lessor to pay the rates for the whole group. This fact should be borne in mind in any consideration of the rent of allotment land, as in the case of garden allotments especially it means a considerable reduction of the net rents.

The principle of the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1883 was applied to allotments by the Allotments and Cottage Gardens Compensation for Crops Act of 1887. For the purposes of compensation an allotment is defined as 'any parcel of land not more than two acres in extent, held by a tenant under a landlord, and cultivated as a garden or a farm'. Under this Act an outgoing tenant can claim compensation for improvements and crops, and labour and manure in preparation for a forthcoming crop. But he may only claim compensation for fruit trees and buildings if the consent of the landlord to the planting or building has been obtained. The amount to be paid is to be fixed by mutual

agreement between landlord and tenant, but if no agreement is made the difference must be settled by arbitration. The landlord and tenant may mutually agree to appoint an arbitrator, or in case of failure to do this, either or both may apply to the Justices of the Peace of the Division in which the holding is situated, and then one of the Justices who is not interested in the holding, or some non-interested competent person shall be appointed as arbitrator. His decision is final, and the award may not be taken into any court. But the amount assessed is recoverable upon the order of a County Court judge. Whenever possible the arbitration is to be made without expenses, but when any remuneration or expenses are allowed the arbitrator apportions the cost between the parties as he sees fit. Provisions for compensation are also included in the Small Holdings and Allotment Act, 1908.

But, as already stated, these provisions are rarely, if ever, used. In the case of field allotments, or those cultivated for farm crops, compensation for improvements is seldom asked for. Often there is not even any work to be paid for, but in case ploughing has been done the cost is ascertained and paid by the incoming to the outgoing tenant. Should it happen that a tenant is obliged to leave the village when his allotment is under crops, or after it has been fully prepared for crops, he usually finds a purchaser who will take over his rights in the allotment subject to the approval of the Committee or landlord. Sometimes such a new tenant is accepted provisionally till the end of the term of occupation of the real tenant. But as the general period for the exchange of tenancy in Oxfordshire coincides with that when the allotment is not usually under crops very little necessity for compensation arises, except in a few localities where a considerable quantity of roots are grown on field allotments.

With respect to compensation for improvements on garden allotments customs are much more widely recognized as necessity for compensation more frequently occurs. On these plots compensation for crops, improvements, and some-

times buildings is freely demanded and paid. In many cases the old agricultural customs of pre-entry and hold-overs are still followed, and in the absence of these the outgoing tenant receives a cash sum for his standing crops, digging, and manures. These sums are not often large. On the other hand comparatively large amounts are often paid for permanent improvements, such as pigsties and tool-sheds erected on these plots. In several localities where garden plots are numerous, a system of compensation approaching in character the 'Evesham Custom' has been established. A tenant who wishes to leave his allotment finds a person who wishes to become a tenant with whom he can make an agreement for the purchase of his tenant-right, or even in many cases, improvements which legally need the consent of the landlord, and which, in the absence of written consent, could not be subject to a legal claim, and together they repair to the landlord or his agent. If the proposed tenant is accepted by the lessor the allotment changes hands, and the outgoing tenant receives the agreed sum in lieu of his rights. In the case of Allotment Associations, which usually have a rule providing that vacant allotments shall be offered to the applicant whose name appears first in the list of new members or applicants, a sub-committee is appointed to deal with claims for compensation. In consultation with the outgoing tenant this committee fixes the sum to be paid and then proceeds to offer the allotment to applicants by rote, on the condition that the incoming tenant settles the claim for compensation on taking possession. This system is followed in the neighbourhood of Oxford, where it is not uncommon for a claim for £5 to be made on about twenty poles of land.

As a rule, the erection of tool-sheds and pigsties on garden allotments is confined to the neighbourhood of towns and the larger villages. Buildings are rarely seen on field allotments, probably because of their distance from the village. But the increasing activity of sanitary authorities in the regulation of village pigsties has made it necessary for some villagers to provide accommodation for their main

meat producer. Garden allotments are often easily accessible, and in a few instances are used as sites for sties.

Landlords never seem to use their common law right to the possession of buildings erected without their consent.

It is not surprising that the customs of tenant right compensation should have become more widely recognized and hardened in the towns than in the villages. In the large villages and small towns the holders of allotments and changes of tenancy are more numerous, and a definite opinion is formed in a group which may well be described as the allotment public. In the absence of any use of law, as is general in this case, such public opinion is bound to regulate the transfer of allotments.

CHAPTER VI

METHODS OF CULTIVATION AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS

The subject of allotments has always possessed a curious fascination for economists who look for the improvement of economic conditions through the increase of industry and thrift among the working classes. Mr. F. W. Hirst, the late editor of *The Economist*, has recently stated[1] that in the provision of gardens of one-eighth to one-quarter of an acre for each cottage there is 'a cure for our worst economic and social evil; and it is a cure which will add very greatly to the national wealth. It will not enrich one class at the expense of another; but it will increase the total product and enlarge the national dividend. It will be a source of health and wealth to tens of thousands of poor families, and it will teach the children the most valuable kind of knowledge—the knowledge of gardening, which is the foundation of agriculture.' The Royal Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture also declared that allotments were worth now some £16 an acre to cottagers over and above the ordinary farm rent of the land. On this basis they calculated that if one-quarter of the agricultural labourers over twenty years of age were each supplied with half an acre of land, and the remainder were each supplied with a quarter of an acre, they would be able to increase their joint incomes by £3,729,872; and the Poor Law Commission of 1834 calculated the profits from allotments at much the same rate. Their estimate of profits on a rood of land was £2 14*s.* when counting labour as cost, or £4 4*s.* 6*d.* when labour is not counted as cost.

[1] *The Six Panics*, 1913, p. 241.

John Stuart Mill took the contrary view. He described allotments 'as a contrivance to compensate the labourer for the insufficiency of his wages, by giving him something else as a supplement to them'.[1] To him, writing amidst the heated discussion of the reform of the methods of relieving pauperism, the purely economic aspect of the allotments question was quite clear. Instead of having his wages made up from the poor-rate he says the labourer is 'to make them up for himself, by renting a small piece of ground, which he cultivates like a garden by spade labour, raising potatoes and other vegetables for home consumption, with perhaps some additional quantity for sale'. And expressing his opinion more forcibly, he says that the only difference between the allowance system and allotments is 'that they make the people grow their own poor-rate'. Some of his statements need careful analysis in view of the results of the increase of allotments, but this essential historical and economic connexion between low wages, poor relief, and allotments cannot gain too much prominence.

Oxfordshire has been one of the counties least affected by the industrial development of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and consequently the rate of wages for agricultural labour has always been low. At the present time, 1914, this county is grouped with Suffolk and Norfolk as the counties in which the total average earnings of farm labourers are less than 16*s.* a week. And in 1909, while the Royal Commission on the Poor Law was sitting, Oxfordshire was one of the agricultural counties in which the percentage of pauperism was highest. It is in relation to the earnings of the labourer and the income necessary to maintain a family that the economic functions and effects of allotments must be studied.

As results of the allotment system, both field and garden, depend very largely on the methods and results of cultivation, some description of this is necessary. For this purpose a further division of garden allotments into classes must be made into (*a*) urban and (*b*) rural.

[1] *Principles of Political Economy.*

(*a*) *Urban Garden Allotments.*

Of the many groups of these in the county no very great difference in the method of cultivation is to be found. Obviously there must be some variation due to the differences in soils, but these differences are overcome much more easily on small garden plots than on field allotments, or farms. The staple crops of urban garden allotments are potatoes and green stuff, the latter of all varieties during their seasons. Indeed, the skill with which most tenants of these gardens manage to arrange a constant supply of green vegetables is remarkable. Beyond these staples the subsidiary crops vary according to the needs or desires of the cultivator. But the most striking difference between garden allotments in town and country is that on the majority of the former flowers are to be seen, and strawberries and other fruit are frequently to be found. In a few cases rye, lucerne, clover, and vetches may be seen on garden allotments, rye and vetches being most common. These crops are usually grown by small tradesmen or private residents who keep a pony. They are sown very early in the autumn, and taken off in April in time to allow potatoes and other crops to be planted, and yield a considerable amount of valuable green feed in the spring.

Usually the garden allotments are cultivated entirely by hand labour, but sometimes a plough and even harrow are used. The rate for ploughing is generally about 1*s.* 6*d.* per chain, with a minimum of 1*s.* 6*d.* per job: and the work is done for hire by small hauliers who keep one horse. But ploughing may be regarded as a strong indication of decadence. The garden allotment holder who has to employ ploughing is rarely a successful or a permanent cultivator. It by no means follows that there is any connexion between the green crops above named and ploughing; in fact this is rarely the case, and the growers of green crops are otherwise often good gardeners. Amongst the flowers roses and the hardy perennials are common, and sweet peas are prominent amongst the annuals. Quite frequently a small glass house

or frame is to be seen, and sometimes a rustic summer-house is provided by the cultivator for the use of his family. In these cases the allotment is literally their health and pleasure resort, and the value of the plot cannot be estimated on a cultural basis. This is also true of many other urban allotments.

When asked for estimates of the produce of their allotments and its value most of these cultivators have no idea, and few can make any estimate. Such estimates as they have ventured to make, however, agree very closely. Occupiers of twenty-pole allotments, using their ground for the production of staple crops, have stated frequently that the produce is worth from 3*s.* to 4*s.* per week all through the year, if compared with the purchase price of the same quality produce at the shops. In view of the yields of some market-garden crops which are not so carefully tended as these small plots there is no reason to doubt these estimates.

The annual monetary costs of working a twenty-pole allotment in an urban neighbourhood may be stated as follows:

	£	*s.*	*d.*		£	*s.*	*d.*
Rent			0	to	1	0	0
Manures			0	„	1	0	0
Seeds and Plants			[illegible]	„		15	0
[illegible]				„		2	6
Interest or cost of shed or tool chest				„		2	6
	2	5			3	0	0

The calculation of the amount of labour required is practically impossible, and no records seem to have been kept by any holder. Even if records were obtainable their value would be doubtful, for much time is spent on the allotments when no work is done. The gardener 'likes to see things grow', and incidentally to talk over many things with his neighbour.

The cost of fertilizing town allotments appears to be continually increasing. In several towns it is said that motors have supplanted horses to such a large extent that the

supply of manure is considerably curtailed. Selected street cleanings were very widely used up till a year or two ago, but many cultivators now object to them, saying that the advent of tar and oil introduces elements which 'poison' the plants. Cleanings from some roads are still available, but these by no means meet the demand. Where manure is still to be had high prices are charged. At Henley, for instance, 5*s.* is the charge for a 'load' of light horse-manure, measuring about eight wheelbarrow loads. In some villages in the county manure of a much stronger nature can be purchased at 5*s.* a load of sixteen barrow loads, and its value is probably treble that of the town manure. It is difficult to see how this can be entirely overcome. Some gardeners have tried using other fertilizers, but without much success. They rarely buy these in pure forms, more often buying mixtures and 'Plant Foods' at high prices, but of doubtful value. A partial solution might be found by growing green crops and digging them in.

If the matter of profit were determined on the commercial system, the balance would probably be the debit side. The close attention to the planting and watering of crops, the time spent in tramping to and from the allotment to work or to collect the produce, to say nothing of the cost of the seed and manure and the primary work of digging, &c., would outweigh the value of the yield. But this would not provide a fair or an adequate test. The many walks and the close attention must be offset by a consideration of the gardener's pleasure in the work, to say nothing of the value to his family of a constant supply of fresh vegetables.

Some few holders of urban garden allotments sell part of their produce, but few, if any, cultivate especially for this purpose. One instance of the sale of produce may be given. At Bicester a lodging-house keeper holds three chains of garden allotments at 5*s.* 6*d.* per chain. The soil is a deep loam on limestone brash. During 1913 he supplied his house from the gardens and realized, in addition, £2 for green peas and £1 for savoy cabbages, many more of which still remained in January, 1914. They were then selling at

from 9*d*. to 1*s*. a dozen, and he expected to realize another 15*s*. for cabbages after supplying his house. The only difference between the cultivation and sale of produce from garden allotments and from market-gardens is that sales by allotment holders are generally made direct to the consumers. But so little is done that further study is unnecessary.

The real value of urban allotments is not to be tested in the economic sphere; it must be tested on a broader basis. Nor can urban garden allotments be regarded as a device to provide an important addition to the labourer's income; for, as a matter of fact, in some districts artisans and small tradesmen are more numerous than labourers as allotment gardeners. While the demand for allotments from these classes is to some extent economic it is more definitely sentimental. And that labourers are not more numerous as cultivators is partly due to their lack of friends who can introduce them to persons who have allotments to let. The membership of the mutual societies for the provision of allotments is very largely confined to highly respectable artisans and to a few labourers of good standing.

One of the chief values of urban allotments is that they provide pleasant and healthful occupation for the cultivator's leisure time. It has often been said that an allotment has redeemed a man who was on the way to habitual intemperance, and this is not at all improbable. Many of the gardeners have been reared in the country, and they have the real instinct of the farmer. Their interest is aroused by the work, and an increase of intelligence and mental force is the result. In the house of the cultivator the produce of the garden contributes directly to health, and sometimes, as when flowers are grown, to beauty. In this sphere the gardens supply demands which would not be met in any other way, and their value is incalculable.

The chief cultural needs on urban allotments are more winter cultivation and a better supply of manure. It is rare, indeed, that allotments are dug or trenched during the autumn, and often the ground is left just as the potatoes

or other crops are removed. The reason for this in villages is partly that the autumn evenings are not long enough to enable the labourer to do the work. In the towns Saturday or other afternoons provide the time, although the occupation is not so pleasant as in the spring, but the advantages of trenching and winter cultivation are not appreciated at their proper value. Perhaps the problem of manuring could be most easily solved by growing green crops during the winter, for covering in spring. A few experimental plots showing how this could be done would be of great advantage.

Where associations let allotments they might very well consider the advisability of providing a sprayer for members, for no cultivator can economically provide one for his own use. This has been done in one or two instances in other parts of England. Also some mutual arrangement for buying seeds, especially potatoes, would be advantageous. The urban cultivator's method of buying seed potatoes in small quantities from a seedsman is an expensive one, and he does not always get the change of seed which would suit his land. A simple arrangement might be worked to advantage where an association for providing allotments already exists.

Another item to which the attention of associations and other lessors of urban allotments might be directed is the aesthetic quality of buildings. These are often of all sizes, shapes, and colours, and sometimes they are covered with old metal sheets showing all kinds of faded advertisements. They rarely fail to be a blot on the precincts of any town, and, although restrictions would never raise the aesthetic quality very high, the worse abuses might be abolished by prescribing tidiness of construction and adopting some range of colours which would suit the locality.

(*b*) *Rural Garden Allotments.*

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between garden and field allotments in villages, especially when the latter are small and within easy reach. Both these cases are rare,

and there is a broad difference in the function and the results of the two types. The primary function of the garden allotment is to supply the cottager with the facilities for raising vegetables for his family. Though detached from the cottage it is either an addition to or a substitute for the cottage garden.

These allotments are almost invariably cultivated by hand for the production of vegetables. On some of them there is a rule against the employment of the plough and the growth of corn. The only crops other than vegetables which appear are the green feed crops mentioned in connexion with urban allotments. These serve the same purpose as in the town, except that very occasionally they are sown to be dug in for fertilizing purposes. Flowers and fruit rarely appear on village allotments cultivated by farm workers. In some cases the employees of small industries who have no gardens use allotments for these crops. The crops grown depend very largely on the size of the gardens attached to the cottages. Where gardens are very small (or do not exist) almost every garden crop may be found on the allotment, but where big gardens are met it is often found that the allotments are used for the production of two or three staple crops, potatoes, parsnips, carrots, and perhaps onions and greens. The crops which need protection and close attention are more or less confined to the gardens.

The villager is more fortunate than the tradesman in respect to manure, but he is under a distinct disadvantage with regard to leisure. His work is confined to the evening hours after five o'clock, while the townsman gets his Saturday afternoon or early closing day, and possibly Sunday morning, for his work, but the villager is too keenly cognizant of public opinion in the country to employ his Sundays on his allotment. These seem to be sufficient reasons for the greater productivity of garden allotments in towns. The direct value of a twenty-pole allotment to the village labourer may range anywhere between 1*s.* 6*d.* and 2*s.* 6*d.* a week. This depends very largely on the nature of

the crops and the closeness of cultivation, which again depend on the cultivator's needs, his ability, inclination, and leisure. But if the food value of the produce, or the price which would be paid for its equivalent on purchase, is estimated, there can be no doubt that the average produce of twenty poles would be worth £5 per annum, or at the rate of £40 per acre. That means that the garden allotment contributes about one-eighth of the income of many a cottage home. Fresh vegetables are more of a necessity in the country than the town, where fresh meat is much more frequently obtained. And if, as an old countrywoman once said to the writer, 'cold cabbage and lard have killed many a baby,' they have kept many an older child alive. To any one who has intimate experience of the life of the village labourer it is unnecessary to explain how large a part of the diet of the family consists of vegetables, especially potatoes. Some studies which were made in Oxfordshire in 1912 enforce this point.[1]

Study No. 1. One-fifth of the food consumed is home produce. One week: 38 lb. potatoes; 1 lb. carrots; 7 lb. greens; 1 lb. turnips. (Small allotment.)

Study No. 2. Nearly one-fourth of the food consumed is home produce. One week: 42 lb. potatoes; 3 lb. kidney beans; 3 lb. parsnips. (Allotment, ¼ acre.)

Study No. 3. One-eighth of the food consumed is home produce. One week: 27 lb. potatoes; 2 lb. carrots; 3 lb. turnips; 5 lb. greens. (Small allotment.)

Study No. 4. One-tenth of the food consumed is home produce. One week: 16½ lb. potatoes; 14 lb. turnips; 5 lb. greens. (Small allotment.)

Study No. 5. One-sixth of the food consumed is home produce. One week: 35 lb. potatoes; 3 lb. turnips; 3 lb. sprouts; 3 lb. parsnips; 4 oz. onions. (Large allotment.)

In these cases the proportion of food consumed produced at home is calculated on its food value of protein and calories

[1] Rowntree and Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives.*

on analysis, and in actual bulk and weight the proportion would be much higher. Further, the studies were made in the autumn, while most vegetables are consumed in the summer when greater variety is obtainable. From the present writer's experience it would be no exaggeration to say that from 20 to 25 per cent. of the diet of many families is directly provided by the garden and garden allotment, to say nothing of the indirect products in the form of bacon and possibly eggs.

The actual monetary cost of the produce would be about £1 7*s.* 6*d.*, i. e. rent 7*s.* 6*d.*, manure (if bought, or worth for sale) 15*s.*, seeds 5*s.*[1] The rest of the cost consists of much strenuous and attentive labour.

Once more, the social value of garden allotments cannot be limited to their contribution to the maintenance of the labourer's family. Out of the desire to encourage good cultivation of allotments and gardens have grown many local Horticultural Associations which hold annual 'Flower Shows'. There are several of these in Oxfordshire. This is not the place to descant on the possibilities and achievements of these societies; but it must be said that they have given vast encouragement to progressive gardening among labourers, and that the annual shows have become local institutions of great social value and importance.

(c) *Field Allotments.*

Since 1880 a change has been slowly taking place in the cultural methods of field allotment holders. Prior to that date nearly all the work was done by hand, and horses were used only for carting purposes; the land was broken with the spade, or much more commonly with the fork and two-pronged 'digger'. The only plough that was used was the 'breast-plough', with which stubble or bean-brush was sometimes skimmed for cleaning purposes in the autumn, and when the work was well done wheat was often planted with-

[1] The village allotment cultivator usually buys less seed, especially less high-priced seeds, than the townsman.

out further cultivation. If deep spring cultivation had been given for the preceding crops, large yields of wheat were raised in this way. But since 1880, as the plots have been increasing in number and size, the horse and the plough have come into prominence. When the plots did not exceed one or two roods, manure was often wheeled in barrows or trucks from the village, and potatoes and roots returned in the same way. The cart was used only to gather in the corn, and often this was borrowed from the employer, or in the case of odd-job men, obtained in return for manual work. But the custom of lending horses to labourers for allotment work has nearly disappeared along with other perquisites and allowances.

Three causes are at the back of this change from manual to horse cultivation. The first in importance is that the number of labourers who are casually employed during the winter time has diminished, and those who are casually employed show an increasing disinclination to use the digging implements, especially when they have the option of other work. Further, the increasing regularity of employment has furnished the labourer with the funds to hire the village haulier to plough his land. Up to 1900 it was not at all uncommon to see five or six hired men digging in a field of allotments. In some villages two or more men were continually employed during the open weather digging allotments for stockmen and artisans, and others in regular employment. This obtains in a few districts in Oxfordshire even now, but it is much more common for the labourers in the arable districts to spend the spare days in the winter open weather digging their own allotments, which in many cases are large. Some people are inclined to attribute the disinclination of the labourer to use the digging implement to moral or physical degeneracy. This is not by any means the case. As a mass the labourers never voluntarily cultivated more than small areas with the spade. When they did so, either for themselves or for wages, they did it because of economic necessity. Under the same conditions they would do it again—reluctantly, as they always did. This

disinclination to dig large areas of land is partly due to the extreme physical exertion demanded, and partly to the loneliness of the task. Digging alone in fields is monotonous and lonely work, the dullness of which has been overcome many times by joining forces. Men have been known to agree to join and dig one's half-acre and then go and dig that of the other, or they will join to spend one half of each day on each man's job. Even then the monotony remains, and where other employment appears, hired men will not stay to dig.

The decline of allotments on the heavier land is very largely due to the decline of digging. They manifestly require the most exertion, but on the other hand they respond to a much greater degree than light land. The difference between yields of hand culture and horse culture is much greater on heavy than light soils. Further, digging has one great advantage over ploughing in that it can often be done when it would be extremely unwise to put a horse on the land.

The second cause is the development of the small plough for one or two horses, so often termed in derision by dealers and farmers 'allotment ploughs'. But the ploughs have outlived derision where the soil is not too heavy nor too poorly cultivated for their use. No soil is formidable to them if under good cultivation, but they cannot be used to advantage in breaking what should be fallow land on intractable soils. The patent for one of the best of these ploughs was obtained in 1894, but they did not come into general use in the midland counties till some ten or twelve years later. At the present time they are to be found wherever there are large groups of allotments. They are cheaper than large ploughs, they can be used with lighter teams, and they are more easily handled at work.

The third cause is connected with the second. When the additions to allotments were made, in the later 'eighties and the 'nineties, much more liberal allowances were made for roads in the subdivision of the plots. It was recognized that the horse must play an increasing part in the economy, especially where acre plots were laid out. Wide roads con-

siderably facilitate ploughing and other work with horses. It is difficult to plough on a small plot because a large proportion is left as headlands, which cannot be ploughed without trespassing on a neighbour's plot. With wide roads only one headland is left, and at present horses are used for drilling and harrowing, as well as for ploughing and cultivating.

The 'dibber' has disappeared much in the same way as the digging tool, but perhaps not to the same extent. Wheat and barley are mostly drilled with a three- or five-furrow drill, but occasionally they are 'set', or dibbed. Beans are more frequently dibbed, though these, too, are drilled when planted in sufficient quantities. Potatoes are entirely hand set, being occasionally dibbed, but more generally trenched, or 'dug in', as the process is called when all the ground is dug over.

The crops are of the same nature as those on the surrounding farms—due partly to soil influences—though oats are an unimportant crop, and clover does not appear in the rotation on a labourer's plot. (Clover—or impoverished clover ley—is often too much in evidence on the village carrier's or higgler's piece.) In the light soil districts the chief crops are wheat, barley, and potatoes; but in the northern part of the county a considerable quantity of roots, especially swedes, are often grown. Roots are a comparatively important farm crop all over the county. On heavy soils beans take the place of barley in the rotation, and potatoes and mangold also appear. But the crops of primary importance to the labourer have been wheat and potatoes. The latter retain their position, while there has been some change of sentiment in regard to wheat as the custom of home baking has declined. Still, wheat remains the most profitable cereal crop for an allotment even if sold or fed to a pig.

Wherever possible the allotment holder on light soil halves his plot, using one part for wheat and the other for potatoes and barley. The barley stubble is usually dunged for wheat. Beans take the place of barley on the heavier soils, and in consequence heavier crops of wheat are usually

raised. Mangolds and swedes are the favourite root crops with allotment holders because they can be fed to pigs to advantage in their seasons. Cottagers who are in the habit of feeding two pigs, or breeding, almost without exception raise some roots. In the northern part of the county allotment holders grow swedes as a necessary crop in the rotation, and sell the roots to farmers from other districts at the rate of about 6*d.* per pot or bushel (approximately half-hundredweight). It is not at all uncommon for small farmers, in districts where swedes are not grown, to go several miles to buy the produce of allotments.

The approximate cost of working an allotment of one acre is as follows:

Worked by hand.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Rent	1	10	0
30 days' work[1] at 2*s.* 6*d.*	3	15	0
Manure (value), 5 loads	1	5	0
Cartage	1	0	0
Threshing, 35 bushels at 4*d.*		11	8
Seed	1	0	0
	£9	1	8

Worked by horses.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Rent	1	10	0
Ploughing	1	0	0
Manure, 5 loads	1	5	0
Spreading		1	6
Seeding ¾ acre and harrowing		5	0
Cartage	1	0	0
Seed	1	0	0
Threshing, 28 bushels at 4*d.*		9	3
Miscellaneous work, hoeing, digging over ground, and planting potatoes, harvesting, and threshing: 10 days at 2*s.* 6*d.*	1	5	0
	£7	15	9

[1] More or less according to nature of soil. Digging an acre may take from 10 to 15 days: usual number about 12, and price £1 10*s.* Some of the land may be dug over a number of times, as for potatoes, in lieu of fallow. The time for other operations also varies according to the texture of the soil.

The price of ploughing varies between 14*s.* and £1 per acre, and the cost of carting obviously depends upon the amount done and the distance from the village; but most good allotment holders spend at the rate of £1 per acre for cartage. The cost of ploughing, as above, is estimated for good work on heavy land.

The yields vary with the locality, the season, and the economic position[1] or character of the cultivator. But against each type of cultivation can be placed estimated average yields which provide good indications of the net results.

Allotment worked by hand. One acre.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Wheat, ½ acre. 20 bushels at 4*s.*	4	0	0
Beans, 3½ chains. 15 bushels at 4*s.*	3	0	0
Potatoes, 1 chain. 12 cwt. at 5*s.*	3	0	0
Mangolds, ½ chain. 1 ton		12	0
	£10	12	0

Over a number of years it will be found that this estimate will not be too high for an allotment fully cultivated by hand. The prices, of course, vary with the market when the produce is sold, but as the cottager is rather a consumer than a producer, and would have to purchase in case he did not possess an allotment, the estimation of value at the highest rate is justifiable. On this basis the net cash profit would be £1 10*s.* 4*d.* per annum, without any allowance for straw. If the straw off-sets the value or cost of manure the profit is £2 15*s.* 4*d.*

Allotment worked by horses.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Wheat, ½ acre. 16 bushels at 4*s.*	3	4	0
Beans or barley, 3½ chains. 12 bushels at 4*s.*	2	8	0
Potatoes, 1 chain. 10 cwt. at 5*s.*	2	10	0
Mangolds, ½ chain. 15 cwt.		9	0
	£8	11	0

[1] The possession of a small balance of income which can be used temporarily to ensure good cultivation, or the possession of a wife or sons who help to work the allotment.

This shows a profit of £2 0*s.* 3*d.* if the value of the manure is off-set by straw. Thus there is a balance in favour of hand cultivation of over 15*s.* Over a number of years there is even a greater balance in favour of hand culture, because the plough cultivator sometimes faces the necessity of having a spring fallow, putting a greater area than usual under potatoes or roots, or of laying by a considerable portion for summer fallow. He does not obtain the same control of couch-grass nor the same amount of aeration of his soil as the man who uses the fork. On many acre-allotments in the county neither expenditure nor yield and value would reach the level of these estimates, but the smaller plots would undoubtedly do so.

In a few instances labourers grow for sale. At Handborough and neighbourhood the allotment holders have made a custom of selling their barley crops standing in the field. The soil is gravelly, and being of a very light nature is 'hungry', and suffers from drought.

One holder—a cowman—cultivating half an acre had one rood under barley and one rood under potatoes in 1913. The barley was sold standing, for 16*s.* The usual price ranges, he said, between £1 and £1 10*s.* If the latter figure were reached he seemed to be well pleased. Another holder—a roadman—cultivating one acre, also halves his allotment between barley and potatoes. In 1913 he sold his barley for £2, but stated that the average price he obtained was £2 10*s.* Although by selling the standing corn he escaped the necessity of harvesting and threshing, he was still able to obtain manure in exchange for the straw—the sale being of the corn only. Probably this was the case in the former instance, but the information was not offered, and the question had not occurred at the time of the inquiry. The roadman has occupied his land for twenty years, and stated that he was certain he had applied fourteen loads of dung per annum for many years. This is applied to the potato patch on which he practically depends for his returns. There could be little return on barley at £5 per acre. The approximate costs could be cited thus:

	£	s.	d.	
Rent	2	0	0	
Ploughing		14	0	
Seed, seeding, and harrowing		16	0	
Hoeing twice		12	0	
Manure carting		10	0	
Straw off-setting manure				Sale of barley
	£4	12	0	£5 0 0
Net return				£0 8 0

The yield of potatoes on this land is very uncertain, but their 'character', as the dealers sometimes say, is good; they are reliable cookers and there is a ready sale for them. On an average the quarter-acre might be expected to yield 20 to 25 cwt., and the half-acre 2 to 2½ tons. At £5 per ton this would yield much the same return as shown in the previous estimates. The growth and sale of potatoes is quite common among allotment holders in the stone-brash area. The half system of crops—a two-year rotation—is usually followed. Barley is the main cereal, though wheat is sometimes planted, but the barley is more generally fed to pigs with the waste potatoes than sold.

Another allotment crop of which a portion is usually sold is beans. Bean-flour used alone, or as mixture of flour and roots in pig-fattening, is often the cause of trouble among the animals, though small quantities, especially with potatoes and barley-meal, make an excellent feed. Beans are often exchanged with the haulier for the services of his horses, or with the miller or dealer for barley-meal, or sold in the course of dealing with the local corn merchant. Prices are usually good. The allotment holder with a small plot can take good care of beans at harvest time, consequently they are clean and dry when threshed. Some of them growing good strains, and using the flail for threshing, are able to sell all their beans for seed purposes.

In the neighbourhood of Oxford some allotments are used for market-garden purposes. On the Glebe Allotments at Headington a large quantity of peas and other vegetables,

with strawberries and other small fruits, are grown. But outside this neighbourhood fruit trees are rarely, if ever, seen on field allotments. The cultivation of sale crops on the Headington allotments is carried on by people who make a business of market-gardening and higgling, and as this will be discussed elsewhere,[1] there is no need to pursue the subject. The bulk of the produce of the labourer's allotment is consumed by his family and his pig, and the bulk of that of the village carrier by his family and his horse.

The village carrier or master tradesman usually cultivates more than one, and sometimes as much as four or five acres, in which case clover and seeds, and often rye or vetches, appear in the rotation. The tendency to cultivate allotments with horses, and to relinquish the more distant allotments, have been of distinct advantage to this class of villagers. As a rule they have the capacity to become good cultivators, but when other forms of employment are available for their horses their allotments are neglected.

The labourer who sells his corn products is in much the same position as the farmer who pursues this policy. He is at the mercy of the market, and he is in great danger of impoverishing his land. The best policy for the labourer, as for the farmer, is to diversify his crops within the limits of his soil, and to the demands of his market—his family. Fortunately, this is most generally done. The value of an allotment to a labourer is by no means to be estimated on the net cash returns on the operations, even where products like potatoes which are ready for final consumption are produced. To the weekly addition to his income of 9*d.* or 1*s.* from the net profit must be added much of the value of the labourer's pig. A few years ago most labourers in a good position aimed at feeding one large pig weighing from twelve to twenty score pounds, the ideal being about fifteen score. But fashion changes everywhere, and with the demand for a finer type of bacon in the towns has come a similar demand from

[1] See later, Pt. II, p. 129.

the villager's family. Quality rather than bulk is sought, and many labourers now feed two small pigs, one to kill as the autumn period for home-curing opens, the other to kill as the cold weather of the spring draws to a close. As the pig-killing time is a feasting time with the labourer's family, this has the great advantage of distributing the glut of meat which cannot be cured; and with the exchanges with neighbours, which are frequently made, fresh meat is more often obtained.

One large pig of 300 lb. weight at 9*s.* 6*d.* per score is worth £7 2*s.* 6*d.*, or two fat pigs of eight score each at 10*s.* are worth £8, and this price by no means represents the consumption value to the labourer. If he did not produce his meat he could rarely buy it in such large wholesale quantities: he must buy it at 9*d.* a lb., if he is lucky enough to get it at that. But many a labourer can produce 300 lb. of bacon on the cash cost of about £1 for his small pig, and the produce of his allotment.

The cost can be indicated as follows:

	£	*s.*	*d.*	
Price of pig	1	0	0	
Value of barley (3½ chains) . .	3	0	0	
5 bushels of bran from wheat ground		15	0	
Waste potatoes, wash, &c., and straw off-set by manure . .				Value of meat
	£4	15	0	£7 2 6
Net return .				£2 7 6

Where two small pigs are fed the initial cost of purchase somewhat diminishes the net return. This may be balanced by considerations of household convenience and the superior quality of meat. It is certain that a well-cultivated allotment and a good pigsty provide a labourer with the means of adding about 2*s.* 6*d.* per week to his income, and in Oxfordshire these means are fully used by many labourers. This sum amounts to 12 to 15 per cent. of the family income in many homes.

In these estimates it has been assumed that the manual

work is all paid for at a cash price, but this is by no means the case. When an acre allotment is cultivated by the occupier either in unemployed time or after work hours the value of thirty days' labour must be added, which leaves this return:

Allotment worked by hand.	£	s.	d.	
Labour	3	15	0	
Net return on allotment operations	2	15	4	
Net return from feeding pig	2	7	6	
Total net return	£8	17	10	= 3*s.* 5*d.* per week.

Or where the horses are hired.	£	s.	d.	
Labour, 10 days	1	2	6	
Net return on allotment operations	2	0	3	
Net return from feeding pig	2	7	6	
Total net return	£5	10	3	= 2*s.* 1*d.* per week.

There can be no doubt that the necessity for seeking this subsidiary income, this 'growing their own poor rates' as John Stuart Mill would have called it, is entailed by the general economic conditions of the labourer's life. In many Oxfordshire villages the cash rate of agricultural wages is 2*s.* per day, while perquisites and 'extras' are few.[1] Very often all 'extras' are counterbalanced by loss of wet days, or of some weeks during the slackest months of the winter season. It would be impossible for a labourer to rear a family of even two or three children, to say nothing of five or six, in health and decency on such an income. His first line of support is his garden, garden allotment, and pig; his second, the field allotment. And these often supply as much as 20 to 25 per cent. of the total income of a family in which the father is the only wage-earner. A garden allotment of twenty poles and half an acre under potatoes and corn will supply a labourer with produce equal in value to one-quarter of his cash wages, or 20 per cent. of his total income from both sources.

However, it must be remembered that the hours of farm

[1] In 1914.

labourers (other than stockmen) in the county are comparatively short; being generally from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., with 1½ hours for meals, and in the northern part of the county a custom has developed whereby the labourers further reduce the 8½ hours. They make a practice of returning home to dinner, although they may be working one mile away from the village, and they walk one way within the dinner hour, and one way in the master's time. Similarly they walk to their work in the master's time either in the morning, or return home in it in the evening, i.e. they start from home at 7 a.m. or time their return to reach home at 5 p.m. Thus the actual working time is reduced to 8 or 7½ hours. But whether spending 8 or 8½ hours on the employer's farm, they have time and strength for allotment cultivation. A garden and a garden allotment, or a garden and half an acre under corn, can undoubtedly be worked by the labourer in the spare time at his disposal, even though no time be lost, except an occasional half-day be taken from work. But it is exceedingly doubtful whether any labourer can cultivate both a garden and a field allotment entirely in leisure time. Better results would be obtained by confining the energies to one allotment.

Presuming that the existing system of employment of farm workers will remain, and that the demand for allotments will be constant, some improvement in cultivation might be brought about. The education authorities are exerting their powers to supply the needs of allotment cultivators by the establishment of 'trial plots'. The objects of these plots are:

(1) To ascertain the most suitable varieties of vegetables.
(2) To demonstrate methods of cultivation.
(3) To demonstrate the use of insecticides and fungicides.
(4) To show the effects of various kinds of manures on crops grown on different soils.
(5) To demonstrate grafting and budding.
(6) To ascertain the value of subjects grown in various districts.
(7) To encourage the cultivation of allotments.

(8) To show the importance of observation and keeping records.

An allotment plot is taken, and a paid steward is appointed locally to supervise cultivation under the direction of the County Horticultural Instructor. Some eight plots are arranged for each year, and altogether thirty villages have had plots, some for several years in succession. About forty varieties of seed of some twenty vegetables are grown by schoolboys, and the results are tabulated. But one object of the plots—to show the importance of records—is scarcely successful, if the tabulation of results provides any criterion. In connexion with the plots an annual exhibition is held in the County Hall, at which an exhibit is usually shown from each plot. In connexion with the trial allotments a system of evening school gardens has also been established 'to give practical and theoretical instruction in the cultivation of allotments'.

The method of establishing trial plots is perhaps the most suitable for assisting the improvement of cultivation, and it might be extended with advantage to every village where a suitable steward can be found. It might also be applied to field allotments, especially to demonstrate varieties of potatoes and the value of spraying, and varieties of barley and wheat.

In the event, however, of any advance in agriculture which made greater demands on the labourer's intelligence and skill, this type of training would scarcely suffice. He may need oral and practical instructions in such subjects as 'agricultural mechanics', 'the horse at work', 'the horse in health and disease', 'feeding and treatment', dealing directly with the responsibilities of the worker. Some provisions for training in manual work have already been made by the education authorities. Nor is this system of trial plots sufficient for the needs of an allotment holder who wants to become an up-to-date small holder. This was recognized some time ago, and a scheme for continuous evening school education was drawn up, but it had to be relinquished through lack of funds.

Many farmers have complained that the labourers save their energies for working their allotments, and no one who has watched villagers on garden allotments can doubt that they show more interest and are more vigorous in this work than when on the farms. This is very natural. Agricultural labour provides less opportunity for economic or social advancement than any other occupation in England. Wages advance as a youth's strength increases, but when the ordinary rate of men's wages is reached the youth in search of advancement must move to another county or to another occupation. Farmers are responsible for this condition, for they rarely consider measures for interesting employees in their work, or to provide a reward for exceptional merit. There is something of a social deadlock in the position of masters and men in an Oxfordshire village. The farmers control the only possible employment, the men the only supply of labour, and the farmers hold rigidly to the customary conditions of labour, while the labourers 'work according to the pay', preferring to obtain additional income in other ways. As there are no home industries, the only possible alternative is an allotment.

In the past labourers have often overworked themselves on allotments. One old labourer said that every hour spent on a field allotment after the ordinary working hours meant one day off a man's life. But the men who worked in this way were making a necessary sacrifice for the family. These sacrifices are not often made at the present time. Greater demand for agricultural labour, the advent of the plough in allotment economy, and somewhat smaller allotments, have done away with the necessity for overwork. In some of the larger villages in which there used to be a number of labourers more or less casually employed, the single men sometimes used to cultivate allotments, and the older men, together with other people who are interested in the doings of the labourers, complain that they no longer do so. One old man said, 'Arter work they want Sunday clothes, a cigarette, and a bike.' He had probably forgotten the causes which drove him to cultivate an allotment in his

younger days, and his hours of extra work had certainly not enabled him to rise out of his class. The young men approached on the question why they did not become allotment holders ask, 'Why should we?' And in the absence of economic necessity the question is difficult to answer. The argument of self-advancement could only apply to a few, for they cannot all become small holders or farmers. The weaver who has finished his day's work on a power loom is not asked to work a cottage hand-loom in the evening. If he has a hobby it is of a type different from his work. And the future of the young farm worker is perhaps as well served by visits to other villages and the towns on a bicycle as by spending leisure hours on allotment cultivation. But in one thing the labourer of to-day fares worse than the labourer of the former generation—his wife gives less assistance on the allotment. The disinclination to engage in other than household work which spread very widely among the wives and daughters of farmers about 1870 spread later to the labourers' wives. City ideals of refinement now dominate most countrywomen, even when they have not the means to follow them, and while the limitation of woman's sphere in field work was undoubtedly an advantage, there would be no degradation in gardening for any countrywoman who had time to spare from family duties. Possibly the tide of opinion may change in the near future, and the labourer's wife may resume her place as assistant gardener for the family.

Although most of the produce of allotments is directly used for the production of energy, the farmer gains no benefit. The addition to health and efficiency made possible by allotments is spread over the whole family, and the extra energy gained by the labourer, or the worry avoided by the addition to his income, is counterbalanced by the energy expended in cultivation. Nor is the efficiency gained by the family bound to return to the employer in the long run, for many of the children are not even employed in the village. Allotments are of distinct value in the system of social economy; they are of little or no value in farm economy.

Were the rate of wages raised, with possibly some extension of hours, though not in proportion to the rise in day wages, there is no doubt that there would be some decrease in the demand for allotments and less evening labour in some districts. In many cases, however, they are a sentimental necessity. The Englishman of peasant origin, like all other peasant peoples, has a strong instinct for the land and the desire to make plants grow, and when a tradition of more or less personal control of land is implanted in any family, an irresistible demand for small plots of land arises.

An idea has existed for many years that allotments provide 'the first rung in the rural social ladder', but it is difficult to estimate how far this is generally realized in fact. Out of 196 small holders for which the Oxfordshire County Council has provided land, 33, or 17·3 per cent., are agricultural labourers, and they hold an average of four acres each.[1] Most of these have been, and still remain, allotment holders. They have not yet risen out of their original class, but that several of them are progressing towards economic independence through the cultivation of larger holdings could not be doubted. The whole of their efforts are directed to this end. But by no means all the small holders who have been labourers rose to their position *via* allotments. One of the largest groups of holdings in Oxfordshire is situated in a village where no field allotments exist. Three of the small holders went directly to good-sized holdings from their employments. Two were farm labourers (one had worked on one farm for over twenty years), and one was a gardener. But large gardens exist in this village, and some market gardening and poultry raising is general among the cottagers.

Among the group of fifty-two County Council tenants who obtain a livelihood solely through the cultivation of their holdings there are a number who were working on farms till they became small holders, and the exact number of those who have been allotment holders is unknown. But certain

[1] See later, Pt. II, p. 132.

agricultural labourers do find economic independence through allotments, first a horse and a cart, and finally a small holding. And many small village carriers and hauliers are enabled to keep a horse and slowly gather a stock of implements by working allotments, the area of which they increase at every possible opportunity, till finally they obtain a small holding. Amongst the County Council tenants there are forty-two hauliers and carriers, and almost without exception these have been allotment holders previous to taking possession of small holdings. The very demand of allotment holders for horse labour has given opportunity for the labourer with a little capital to find sufficient work to keep a horse, by which, with his own allotments, he is able to maintain himself, and gathering together a stock of small implements for use on allotments, eventually to equip a small holding. Several instances of this process have been found in the county. Thus there is no doubt that a few energetic and intelligent labourers become self-supporting cultivators of land, and some eventually obtain control of fairly large farms, through the instrumentality of allotments. And if the number of small holdings increases, the tendency will be to draw more tenants directly from the ranks of agricultural labourers, for the village carriers, artisans, and shopmen have obtained small holdings largely because their demand was vocal, sometimes even noisy, while the labourers' demand has not been so strongly expressed.

The primary functions of allotments, however, will still remain the provision of a subsidiary source of income, and the possibility of the personal control and cultivation of a plot of land for the labourer. The wages earned by the persons employed are not sufficient to maintain them and their families and to provide against average risks of sickness or old age. Even during the best working years of the Oxfordshire labourer's life extra exertion on an allotment is necessary to procure the means to raise his family in health and decency, and in old age the labourer and his wife generally have to be assisted by the poor-relief

authorities. In view of rising social feeling against this condition of things it is difficult to say how long it will last, or exactly what effect a rising rate of wages would have on allotment demand and cultivation. But till a high standard rate of wages is established, and employment is completely regularized, there will be a steady demand for field allotments in Oxfordshire; and even were these ideals attained some labourers will still feel the necessity of controlling small plots of land through which they can feel their connexion with the soil, express their instinct for cultivation, and increase their social importance and stability. For the last eighty years the labourer has been trying to raise his economic position. Allotments have been his best support in the struggle, and while he retains them his poverty can never be so great, nor his personal interest in the land so little, as in the opening years of the nineteenth century when the first allotment plots were laid out.

But there is no miracle-working virtue in allotments. They cannot provide 'a cure for our worst economic evils', even in the countryside, and he would be a happy man who gained a profit of £16 from an acre of land; but by the cultivation of vegetables and corn, and by feeding a pig, the labourer is enabled in a low-wage county to keep from his growing family the insistent pangs of hunger, and sometimes put a considerable barrier between himself and the poor-house.

APPENDIX I

THE CHANGES IN ALLOTMENT TENANCIES AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE PARISH OF STONESFIELD, OXFORDSHIRE, 1895-1913

In 1895 the Stonesfield Parish Council hired from the Vicar of the neighbouring parish of Wootton 70 acres 3 roods 14 poles of land. Just over 37 acres of this land is situated in Wootton parish, and the remaining 33 acres of land is in Stonesfield parish, but the whole of the farm is in one block and is within easy reach of the village of Stonesfield. The rent paid to the Vicar of Wootton amounts to £73 per annum.

Out of 70 acres 3 roods 14 poles, some 68½ acres are let as allotments to the villagers, the remaining 2½ acres being roads and fences. To the tenants of the allotments are given the full acreage on which their rent is estimated, only the paths or baulks between allotments being measured in the division. The rent charged to the allotment holders is 30*s.* per acre, with an allowance of 15 per cent. discount for cash. This discount is not always earned, but the Council has only lost the rent of half an acre for one half-year, and has thus established an astonishingly good record for eighteen years' experience of allotment letting.

NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS AND NUMBER OF TENANTS IN EACH YEAR

	Persons with one allotment.	Persons with two allotments.	Persons with three allotments.	Persons with four allotments.	No. of Plots.	No. of Tenants.
1895-6	35	2	...	...	39	37
1896-7	35	2	...	...	39	37
1897-8	35	2	...	...	39	37
1898-9	35	2	...	...	39	37
1899-1900	31	4	...	...	39	35
1900-1	32	4	...	...	40	36
1901-2	34	5	...	...	44	39
1902-3	34	5	...	...	44	39
1903-4	31	7	...	...	45	38
1904-5	33	5	1	...	46	38
1905-6	37	4	1	...	48	42
1906-7	37	4	1	...	48	42
1907-8	37	4	1	...	48	42
1908-9	37	4	1	...	48	42
1909-10	34	6	1	...	49	41
1910-11	33	6	...	1	49	40
1911-12	35	5	...	1	49	41
1912-13	32	5	1	1	49	39

NUMBER AND ACREAGE OF ALLOTMENTS AT THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE LAND IN 1895

Ref. No. in books.	Less than one acre. a.	r.	p.	Ref. No. in books.	One acre and over. a.	r.	p.	Ref. No. in books.	Two acres and over. a.	r.	p.	Ref. No. in books.	Three acres and over. a.	r.	p.	Ref. No. in books.	Four acres and over. a.	r.	p.	Ref. No. in books.	Five acres and over. a.	r.	p.	Ref. No. in books.	Six acres and over. a.	r.	p.
3	0	2	0	1	1	0	34	13	2	0	25	30	3	0	15	34	4	0	0	36	5	0	0	37	6	0	0
4	0	2	0	9	1	0	0	26	2	0	0	35	3	0	36									38	6	0	0
5	0	2	0	10	1	0	0	27	2	0	0													39	6	0	22
6	0	2	0	11	1	0	0	28	2	0	0																
7	0	2	0	12	1	0	32	29	2	0	0																
8	0	2	0	19	1	0	0	31	2	0	0																
14	0	2	0	20	1	0	0	32	2	0	0																
15	0	2	0	21	1	0	0	33	2	0	0																
16	0	2	0	22	1	0	0																				
17	0	2	0	23	1	0	0																				
18	0	2	0	24	1	0	0																				
				25	1	0	0																				
				2	1	0	0																				
11	5	2	0	13	13	1	26	8	16	0	25	2	6	1	11	1	4	0	0	1	5	0	0	3	18	0	22

ACREAGE OF ALLOTMENTS ON SUBSEQUENT DIVISION.

(Years of greatest subdivision, 1909–10 and 1910–11.)

Ref. No. in books.	Less than one acre. a. r. p.	Ref. No. in books.	One acre and over. a. r. p.	Ref. No. in books.	Two acres and over. a. r. p.	Ref. No. in books.	Three acres and over. a. r. p.	Ref. No. in books.	Four acres and over. a. r. p.	Ref. No. in books.	Five acres and over. a. r. p.	Ref. No. in books.	Six acres and over. a. r. p.
2	0 2 0	1	1 0 34	13	2 0 25	35	3 0 0	34	4 0 0	36	5 0 0	37	6 0 0
2a	0 2 0	10	1 0 0	26	2 0 0							38	6 0 0
3	0 2 0	12	1 0 32	27	2 0 0							39	6 0 0
4	0 2 0	22	1 0 0	30	2 0 15								
5	0 2 0	23	1 0 0	31	2 0 0								
6	0 2 0	24	1 0 0	32	2 0 0								
7	0 2 0	28	1 0 0	33	2 0 0								
8	0 2 0	29a	1 0 0										
9	0 2 0	29	1 0 0										
9a	0 2 0												
11	0 2 0												
11a	0 2 0												
14	0 2 0												
15	0 2 0												
16	0 2 0												
17	0 2 0												
18	0 2 0												
19	0 2 0												
19a	0 2 0												
20	0 2 0												
21	0 2 0												
21a	0 2 0												
25	0 2 0												
25a	0 2 0												
28a	0 2 0												
28b	0 2 2												
26	13 0 0	9	9 1 26	7	14 1 0	1	3 0 0	1	4 0 0	1	5 0 0	3	18 0 0

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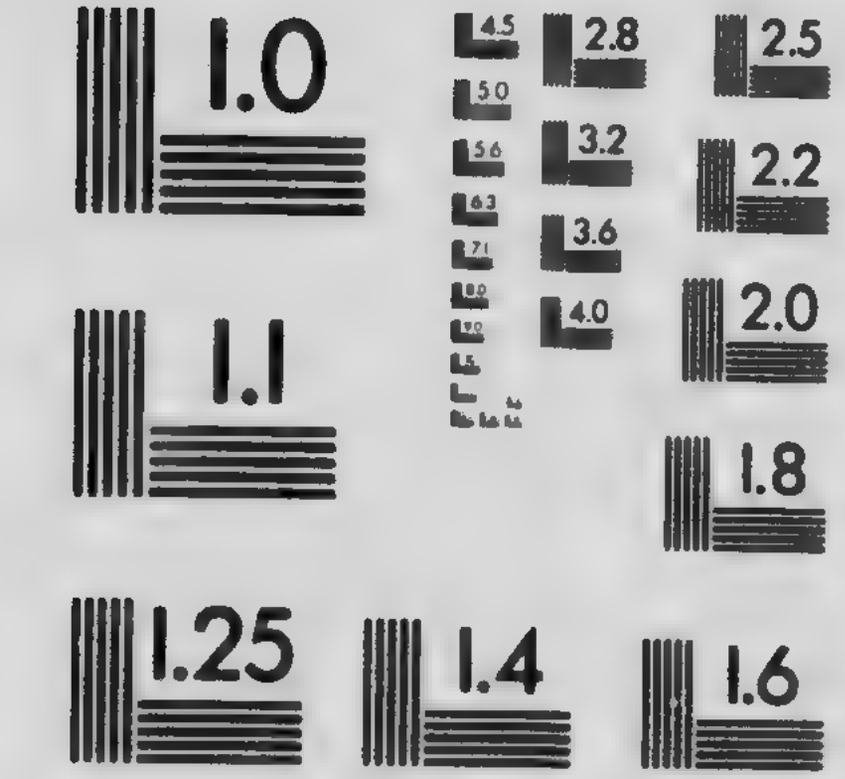

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APPENDIX II

INCREASE AND DECREASE OF ALLOTMENTS UNDER PARISH COUNCILS IN OXFORDSHIRE, 1908-14.

	Total of Land let as Allotments.									Number of Allotment Holders.			
	1908.			1914.			Increase.			Decrease.							
	a.	r.	p.	a.	r.	p.	a.	r.	p.	a.	r.	p.	1908.	1914.	Increase.	Decrease.
Asthall	0	3	0	0	3	5	0	0	5				15	16	1	
Aston and Cote				10	0	0	10	0	0					92	92	
Barford St. Michael	11	0	2	11	0	2							25	16		9
Beckley	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	1	0				1	1		
Benson	10	1	29	9	1	37				0	3	32	92	79		13
Brize Norton	30	0	0	41	0	0	11	0	0				17	35	18	
Chalgrove	13	0	14	15	0	14	2	0	0				20	21	1	
Chinnor	9	0	16	9	0	16							89	88		1
Clanfield				10	0	36	10	0	36					36	36	
Coggs	3	3	28	5	1	28	1	2	0				21	26	5	
Cropredy				5	0	0	5	0	0					10	10	
Crowmarsh Gifford				4	3	27	4	3	27					37	37	
Deddington	116	2	19	116	2	19							46	47	1	
Enstone				2	2	0	2	2	0					5	5	
Eye and Dunsden	37	0	0	37	0	10	0	0	10				13	16	3	
Filkins	19	1	37	19	1	37							26	25		1
Finstock	27	0	0	54	0	0	27	0	0				20	34	14	
Fulbrook	6	0	24	6	0	24							32	29		3
Garsington				10	0	0	10	0	0					12	12	
G. and L. Bourton				1	2	0	1	2	0					29	29	
Hailey	39	0	0	37	0	16				1	3	24	70	70		
Headington	64	0	0	64	0	0							178	262	84	
Hook Norton				14	0	25	14	0	25					40	40	
Hornton				6	1	0	6	1	0					45	45	

	Total of Land let as Allotments. 1908.			1914.			Increase.			Decrease.			Number of Allotment Holders. 1908.	1914.	Increase.	Decrease.
	a.	r.	p.	a.	r.	p.	a.	r.	p.	a.	r.	p.				
Ipsden	2	2	11	4	2	0	2	0	11				31	43	12	
Islip				30	1	38	30	1	38					18	118	
Kidlington	8	0	0	8	0	0							26	29	3	
Kidmore End	1	3	24	2	1	24	1	2	0				19	19		
Kingham	8	3	0	9	1	8	0	2	8				75	83	8	
Kirtlington				3	1	0	3	1	0					17	17	
Langford	14	3	22	14	3	22							9	7		2
Lower Heyford																
Marston	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	1	0					36	70	
Milton-under-Wychwood	22	1	11	23	0	0	0	2	29				65	50		15
Northmoor				6	2	6	6	2	6					8	8	
North Newington				0	2	0	0	2	0					1	1	
Piddington				10	0	20	10	0	20					10	10	
Ramsden				10	0	0	10	0	0					36	36	
Rotherfield Greys				3	0	0	3	0	0					19	19	
Shiplake	2	0	0	2	0	0							20	20		
Shipton-under-Wychwood	8	0	0	8	0	0							81	80		1
Shutford W.				25	2	0	25	2	0					36	36	
Southstoke and Woodcote	8	3	15	8	3	15							49	51	2	
Stanlake	10	0	0	10	0	0							26	36	10	
Stonesfield	67	2	4	67	2	4							43	45	2	
Tetsworth				15	1	16	15	1	16					45	45	
Warborough				16	0	3	16	0	3					84	84	
Wardington																
Watlington	10	1	0	10	1	0							98	108	10	
Wootton				25	2	16	25	2	16					23	23	
Yarnton	3	0	0	3	0	31	0	0	31				7	3		4

PART II. SMALL HOLDINGS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The position of the small holding in rural economy is a problem which presents many aspects to an observer. The question of the small versus the large holding as the unit of agricultural production was debated for more than a century, and many reasons were advanced in favour of the establishment of small units of cultivation, covering almost all kinds of economic, political, and social considerations. Quite frequently, however, some important aspects of the development of agriculture were neglected in the discussion. It was not often remembered that the great advance which was made in methods of agricultural production in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century was concurrent with the development of the large-farm system. Unfortunately this advance in productive methods was not accompanied by an equal advance in the system of distribution of the profits resulting from the industry. No candid student of agricultural history during the period of the great advance could state that the labourer received his due share of the results of progress. The Report on Labourers' Wages of 1824, and that of the Poor Law Commission of a decade later, the Reports on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture of 1843 and 1867, and the articles of James Caird in 1851, all bear evidence to the fact that in the midlands, southern and western counties the progress of the employee was not equivalent to the progress of other agricultural classes. The problems of creation of wealth in agriculture were assiduously studied, but the problems of sound principles of distribution of that wealth did not receive

more than intermittent attention. The matter stood thus up to about the year 1870, at which time labour became more self-conscious and began to search for a solution of its peculiar problems.

The advantage of large units had first been perceived in industry, where the principle of large-scale production had been more extensively and warmly received than in agriculture. In industry the progress from the family unit of production to the joint-stock company had been rapid. In agriculture this family unit was never superseded, for while on one hand the number of families in control of production diminished, the area in control of the remaining families increased. And while there was the same division of function of labour and control in industry and agriculture, there was a wide distinction between the result of the division in the two spheres of production. In industrial areas labourers were numerous and were in constant contact with each other; in rural areas they were scattered, they worked in small groups, and had few points of contact with each other, or with the outside world. The consequence was that whereas the weaver with his hand-loom, who lost his old basis of independence in production, found a new basis in the trade union, the co-operative and friendly society, and in similar institutions, the peasant cultivator, who lost his basis of independence when he lost his small holding, found no such new institutions for self-protection or self-realization. The effort of the Dorchester labourers to form such an institution in 1834 was so successfully checked that no new effort was made till the organization of the Herefordshire union movement began in 1871, and the National Union in Warwickshire in 1872. The movement failed, partly because of inherent weaknesses in the organization more or less due to the economic and intellectual condition of the labourers. Their wages were insufficient for any margin of subscription to any association, many of them were unable to read or write, and consequently to develop an effective organization. In spite of these troubles the movement scored initial successes. The greatest factor in its ultimate

failure was the loss of capital and fall in prices resulting from the wet seasons and the influx of foreign produce in the 'seventies'. In the disorganized state of the industry which followed the resident labourers were too numerous, and the instinct of self-preservation led once more to the search for individual means of protection, competition for employment, reduced wages and the inquiry for means to add to the earnings of employment, together with the search for alternative occupation. Allotments were established to enable the labourers to eke out their earnings, and it was at this time that the modern demand for small holdings arose. Since 1882 the demand for small holdings must be considered only in relation to the general conditions of life amongst farm labourers.

The labourers' movement of the 'seventies' was confined almost entirely to those counties in which little progress had been made towards the improvement of their economic position. The allotments and small holdings movement was largely confined to the same counties, and this is equally true of the most recent development in the movement. An examination of the wages of farm labourers in 1907, and of the small holdings movement since that date, gives the following results. In twenty-one counties in which the average earnings of ordinary farm workers *exceed* 17*s.* 6*d.* (the average for England) there are 294,400 males employed in agriculture, including horsemen, cattlemen, shepherds, and those not otherwise distinguished, but excluding bailiffs and foremen. In these counties 3,669 agricultural labourers have applied for small holdings since 1907; this number amounts to 1·5 per cent. of the total, or 15 per 1,000. The number of holdings actually established in these counties is sufficient for just over ten men in each thousand employed, assuming that they were all let to those previously employed in agriculture. In nineteen counties in which average earnings *fall below* the general average for England there are 294,200 agricultural labourers. In these counties 7,393 have applied for holdings since 1907; and this number amounts to over twenty-five per 1,000 males employed.

The number of holdings actually established is 8,153, which would provide for twenty-eight per 1,000 of the total males employed on farms. The facts are clearly brought out in the following table:

RELATION BETWEEN RATES OF WAGES AND DEMAND FOR SMALL HOLDINGS.

COUNTIES IN WHICH EARNINGS ARE ABOVE AVERAGE.

County.	*Average earnings of ordinary labourers.* s.	d.	*Number of men employed.*	*Number who have applied for small holdings since 1907.*	*Proportion of applicants to number of men employed (per cent.).*	*Number of holdings provided since 1907.*	*Proportion of holdings to number of men employed (per cent.).*
Durham . .	21	9	5,723	57	·9	105	1·8
Northumberland	21	2	7,383	144	1·9	76	1·0
Derby . .	20	5	7,763	21	·2	61	·8
Middlesex . .	20	3	4,123	20	·4	18	·4
Yorks, W. R. .	20	0	19,807	74	·3	193	·9
Lancashire .	19	10	20,050	117	·5	70	·3
Yorks, N. R. .	19	7	12,066	15	·1	40	·3
Lincoln . .	19	5	38,866	(1,094)[1]	3·8	618	1·5
Holland Div. .	...		...	730	...	...	...
Kesteven .	...		...	76	...	...	...
Lindsey . .	...		...	238	...	...	...
Nottingham .	19	5	9,[illegible]2	21	·2	60	·6
Cumberland .	19	3	[illegible]	27	·4	31	·4
Yorks, E. R. .	19	3	[illegible]	281	2·0	270	1·9
Westmoreland .	19	1	[illegible]	7	·3	9	·4
Cheshire . .	19	0	14,[illegible]	319	2·2	183	1·2
Kent . . .	18	10	32,656	179	·5	130	·3
Leicester . .	18	9	8,477	64	·7	134	1·5
Surrey . .	18	9	10,230	16	·1	109	1·0
Stafford . .	18	8	12,545	104	·8	109	·8
Shropshire. .	18	0	13,693	125	1·4	93	·6
Sussex . .	17	9	21,253	58	·2	42	·2
Devon . .	17	9	21,444	500[1]	2·3	485	2·2
Cornwall . .	17	7	10,430	356	3·4	152	1·4

Total men employed, 293,409; proportion applying for small holdings, 1·5 per cent.

[1] Number uncertain, 'Majority' being stated instead of number for 1908. Proportion calculated.

COUNTIES IN WHICH EARNINGS ARE BELOW AVERAGE.

County.	*Average earnings of ordinary labourers.* s.	d.	*Number of men employed.*	*Number who have applied for small holdings since 1907.*	*Proportion of applicants to number of men employed (per cent.).*	*Number of holdings provided since 1907.*	*Proportion of holdings to number of men employed (per cent.).*
Hampshire .	17	5	19,492	240[1]	1·2	201[1]	1·0
Somerset . .	17	3	18,057	188	1·0	625	3·4
Warwick . .	17	2	11,090	81	·7	129	1·1
Hereford . .	17	1	8,922	139	1·5	73	·8
Rutland . .	17	0	1,636	33	2·0	28	1·7
Buckingham .	16	11	11,469	132	1·1	218	1·9
Hertford . .	16	10	11,362	77	·6	177	1·5
Northampton .	16	9	13,621	59	1·2	141	1·4
Peterborough.	...		...	114	...	56	...
Berkshire . .	16	8	10,920	52	·4	90	·8
Essex . . .	16	4	32,462	184	·5	214	·6
Bedford . .	16	3	9,593	646	6·7	647	6·7
Cambridge. .	16	3	19,448	911	14·7	1,194	11·5
Isle of Ely .	...		...	(1,960)[2]	...	1,051	...
Worcester . .	16	3	11,445	296	2·5	532	4·6
Huntingdon .	16	2	6,395	521	8·1	449	7·0
Dorset . .	16	1	11,310	67	·5	105	·9
Wilts. . .	16	0	17,896	207	1·1	261	1·4
Suffolk . .	15	9	30,366	294	·9	342	1·1
Norfolk . .	15	4	36,457	961	2·6	1,375	3·7
Oxford . .	14	11	12,336	231	1·9	245	1·9

Total men employed, 294,277; proportion applying for small holdings, 2·5 per cent.

[1] Southampton.

[2] Number uncertain, 'Majority' being stated instead of number for 1908. Proportion calculated.

This table includes the number of all classes employed in agriculture, except bailiffs and foremen. The number of farm labourers applying for holdings has been compiled from Table A of the *Small Holdings Reports* of the Board of Agriculture, and the number of holdings provided since 1908 is from the same source. The earnings are those of ordinary farm workers (except in case of Northumberland and Durham, where those of carters are given), and are taken from the *Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour, V.* Agriculture, 1907. Cd. 5460. 1910. The average earnings of ordinary farm labourers in England was 17*s.* 6*d.* per week, and counties are grouped above and below the average.

So far as the labourer has been concerned the demand for small holdings has been of two kinds. The inquiry for holdings of five acres or thereabouts resembles that for allotments in that it springs from the necessity to supplement the income from wages; that for holdings sufficient to maintain a family comes from the desire for economic and intellectual independence. There is no doubt whatever that in those counties in which ordinary labourers or 'day-men' form the great majority of farm employees, many labourers feel that an income of 16*s.* a week is scarcely a just distribution of the wealth created by the aid of their exertions. As employees the rate of their income is determined by many circumstances, some of which are beyond their personal control. On small holdings they feel that the exertions and intelligence of the family have more scope in the determination of the income enjoyed, and for independence of thought and expression. But this desire for greater moral independence can scarcely be divorced from the general conditions, and when labour is scarce and dear, with possibility of alternative employment, or some other form of protection, the conditions of employment will deal only with the essential economic relations between employer and employed. Where labour is plentiful and cheap other conditions may be imposed or implied.

In the successive stages of industrial development, workers have felt exactly the same needs for increasing incomes, for securing a basis for moral independence, for exercise of ability in organization and control. In some instances the small shop has served, but more generally the means have been of an entirely different character. The trade union, the friendly society, the co-operative society, the political society, the workmen's club, debating and educational societies, often leading on to some public service, together with provision for advancement to offices of control in the industry itself, have met these demands when made by all types of men. The State has never been called upon to use its revenue and machinery to re-establish the small unit of production which economic forces had destroyed.

The establishment of small holdings has been advocated by many persons for many reasons. Amongst these may be enumerated the following:

(1) They increase production.
(2) They maintain or increase the population living on the land.
(3) They distribute property or its control.
(4) They provide an agricultural or rural social ladder.
(5) They encourage thrift, sobriety, and industry.

Before any useful consideration of these assertions can take place a decision must be made as to a rational social policy in regard to the organization of agricultural production. Four aims usually emerge on the grounds of economic welfare or of national power, namely, that the system adopted shall—

(*a*) maintain directly the largest possible rural population; or,
(*b*) that it shall produce the greatest possible gross amount of food; or,
(*c*) that it shall yield the greatest possible net income for the families directly concerned with the cultivation of the land; or,
(*d*) that it shall yield the greatest possible net amount of food for sale for the sustenance of our industrial population.

The first and second aims are almost identical and may be bracketed together. They assume that the maintenance of a numerous population of physically strong and virile individuals ultimately depends on the employment of a large number of people in rural pursuits. Advocates of such a policy sometimes ignore essential economic considerations. The enormous growth of British population and the wealth which maintains it at its present standard of [illegible] directly due to the industrial development of our [illegible]. An increase of population on the land which does not lead to increased production, or leads to increased production at advancing unit cost, will inevitably lower the national income and the standard of life. The danger of establish[illegible]

a large population on the land is that the profit yield may not be more than sufficient to maintain it, for in such case there is no margin for saving. Consequently a comparatively low ratio of capital to manual labour is employed in production, and processes which might be carried out with machinery are carried out by men. This effect may be seen in all peasant countries, but notably in such as Ireland, India, Japan, and China. National power depends as much upon capabilities of economic production as upon the quantity of population. One man with a team, or engine, or machine may be more effective than ten men and a donkey.

The third and last aims are not identical, but a form of organization which will serve one will eminently serve the other. Both depend on the employment of a comparatively high ratio of capital to manual labour in production. In a country which is predominantly industrial it would be fatal to establish a system which doubled the population on the land without securing a proportionate increase in production, because of the increased dependence of the industrial population on foreign supplies of food. Nor can a modern State afford to develop a system in which on one hand there is a rich and powerful industrial population, and on the other a poor and comparatively powerless agricultural class. Under such conditions there would be a constant efflux from the countryside and an ever-recurring problem of 'rural depopulation'. The system of production adopted in agriculture must be such as will yield a standard income equal to that yielded in industry. There is undoubtedly a class of people who will sacrifice some income for a country life, or for the possession of rural property, but these are not the people who make the best use of land for production. It was the stimulus of adventure, of desire to excel, of profit, that led to the development of production in industry. The desire for repose, or the security of a self-contained holding, will never lead to development in agriculture.

There is so little detailed knowledge of the production on small and large holdings that it is difficult either to prove or refute the argument regarding small holdings in general.

It needs to be stated, however, that the bulk of production cannot be considered apart from unit cost. Disregard of this principle leads directly to wasteful use of energy and intelligence. Nor can the economy of the large or small unit in agricultural production be determined except by detailed study of the necessary conditions of production of various commodities. All the world over, the sheep farm has been a large land unit. In some new countries the beef farm has been a wide grazing ranch. In some new countries again the wheat farm has been a large unit of land during stages of development. Various types of crop and stock systems in our own country will be considered in relation to the small holding in a later chapter.

The arguments in favour of small holdings in regard to the problem of rural depopulation have been many and varied. The facts as to the decline in rural population need no recapitulation. Much thought, however, should be given to proposals to bring about a return to the land. The movement from rural to urban centres of population has been apparent among all western nations during recent decades. The main general causes have been the superior economic attraction of industrial occupations and the superior social attractions of town life, and neither small holdings nor cinemas will stem this tide. The provision of an independent holding for 80 per cent. of the adult males employed in agriculture would only stop the movement for one generation, unless holdings are to be subdivided at recurring periods. Under such conditions the ideal of production can only be that system which yields the maximum gross product per acre, whereas so long as agriculture has to compete with industry for brain and muscle the ideal must be the system which will give the maximum return per unit expenditure of human intelligence and energy. On this basis alone can agriculture compete with urban industry for labour whether of the employed or the self-directed type.

The argument for the increase of population on the land, apart from the need for more labour for productive purposes, is based on the physical superiority of the villager over

the urban dweller. We are told that 'outside the metropolis, mortality in general increases in proportion to urbanization', and that 'phthisis mortality increases with urbanization from a minimum in rural districts to a maximum in London'. 'Practically all diseases are less fatal in rural districts . . .'

'For the human species the mud cabin on the moor is a healthier home than the finest mansion in Mayfair.' 'The lesson to be learnt is that the surest way of improving the health of the nation is by increasing the proportion of the rural population, developing the Small Holdings Acts, and extending town-planning schemes.' Such views ignore the fact that modern life, and indeed the service of the modern State, demands a mental as well as physical quality in mankind. The modern development of mental quality has been very largely the result of urbanization. The countryman is not inherently the mental inferior of the townsman, but his human environment is not so varied, nor is his imagination stimulated to the same extent as that of the town dweller. One factor in his comparatively slow development has been that his income has afforded little surplus over primary necessaries for expenditure on such secondary needs as education and the educative amusements which the townsman procures so easily. But when all has been said in justification of the condition of the rural worker, it must be confessed that the small holding, as it has existed, has never developed those mental and social qualities which arise from contact with men in the mutual protection and advancement associations which accompany industrial life. There is need for a greater rural population, but it must be established under such economic conditions as will provide for an adequate standard of physical and mental well-being. In our own country the prevailing standard amongst the mass of the population has been set by the system of large-scale production in industry. The political argument for small holdings, that the greater distribution of possession or control of property is a bulwark against attacks on the institution of property,

will not be discussed. So far as the small holder is concerned there is little demand for real property possession, but control is desired on economic and also on wider grounds. The control of property wisely used enlarges the man as well as his income, but this condition depends to some extent upon the amount of property controlled. If the property is insufficient for the purpose of establishing independence on the standard at which the small holder desires to live, the effect is often the opposite to that desired. He will sell his self-respect to maintain his property. Young's dictum on the 'magic of property' has blinded many persons to the inherent poison of property—that it is apt to lead men to live to acquire, rather than acquire to live—but it has not blinded all small holders' sons to this defect. The magic of property turns sand into gold; the poison of property sometimes turns human sweetness into gall. Many men who have reached middle age are willing to sacrifice almost everything to the increase of their property; they will give up leisure and hobbies, they will even sacrifice their future health, to buy another horse and cart. Often it is done by penurious saving rather than by improving methods of production. The young man has other attractions, leisure to him is valuable, and he need not be lazy because he regards it as too valuable to be sacrificed to property, because of the limitations of life entailed. He sees his father become a slave to a crop, or to a herd of stock, he feels keenly the strong demand made on his own energy and patience to increase the capital on the little holding, and wisely or unwisely gives up the struggle. Some other occupations yield returns in cash or other satisfactions which more than compensate for the loss of control of property, and the small holding is left. Nor is independence always secured by those who remain. When the labourer becomes a small holder he changes the condition of dependence on employment and his employer for dependence on the weather, the market, and sometimes on the merchant or the auctioneer. Nature can be as hard a task-master as any industrial magnate, but some men

prefer to be at the call of the wind and the sun rather than of the 'hooter' or the clock. There can be no doubt whatever that a number of the present generation of farm labourers are anxious to exchange dependence on employment for dependence on their personal ability to control property and combat the weather and the market. In a county like Oxfordshire, however, where there are over 9,000 labourers above twenty years of age, it is practically impossible to provide a basis for independence or self-realization for all in the form of the independent holding. The only hope for such a basis for the majority of the class must be in some form of mutual association. Some students of agrarian history appear to think that the development of mutual protective associations can never proceed in rural areas. If this is true, then we can never hope to provide the machinery by which the labourer can achieve independence, or realize his aspirations, except by the acute subdivision of our land. The state may interfere on the behalf of labour, but the moral effect of such interference is very different from the effect of enabling the labourer to fight for his own interest. A generous landlord may ensure a well-fed, adequately housed population, but a spoon-fed man can never be more than an overgrown baby. In industry, the distribution of the control of property in production has not been necessary either to the worker's independence or as a spur to production, nor is this necessarily the case in agriculture. Some form of property is undoubtedly a psychological necessity to well-being, but it need not of necessity be real property, nor even personal property of the productive type known as 'capital' goods. Enjoyment goods, sometimes known as consumption capital, such as furniture or a bicycle, may meet the desire for property equally with a plough. Indeed, it is with property of this kind that most people are satisfied. Nor is property in productive goods always necessary as a stimulus to production. The motives which inspire a man to work have been described in an earlier section, but we may say that the spur of profit or gain, even in the form of wages or salary,

is often as potent a stimulus in production as the possession of property. On the other hand, the possession of real property sometimes leads to a feeling of security and slackness. A cultivator in full possession of his holding can live even when failing to make a profit on his business, and may even do so for many years while suffering loss, but the farmer who has no real property must make a profit to live, unless he is to live upon his movable capital, which will soon vanish. In England security of occupation has proved to be of more importance than actual possession of farms, and under a public authority the occupant of a small holding should have every reasonable security. But even were he the nominal owner, subject to a mortgage or long-term purchase conditions, it is doubtful whether his economic security or his freedom of action is greater than that of a modern worker in industry who has other forms of property and of protection.

In industry the youth who starts at the foot of the ladder is not limited in his aspirations towards exercise of control by the necessity of first obtaining property. The functions of management are divided and subdivided, and men of proved capacity in their sphere are put in charge of some aspect of organization or control. In agriculture the family unit of capital in production is generally accompanied by a centralization of all management and organization. There are very few posts of management open to the labourer who feels his inherent capacity for control and wishes to exercise it. For this reason the small holding has found advocates, because it provides one step in the process of development from labourer to large-farm manager. It is singular that this demand for an agricultural ladder was first made in 1885,[1] about the time of the breakdown of the labourers' union and the enfranchisement of the labourer. While this demand recognizes capacities for management in erstwhile labourers, it also appears to recognize that the large farm

[1] Speech by Mr. Stanhope, President of the Board of Trade, quoted by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham, 1885. Vide *Speeches of Joseph Chamberlain*, edited by H. W. Lucy, 1885.

and not the small holding is the economic unit of production. The small holding does provide means by which a few labourers can obtain control of large farms, but the number is exceedingly small. The table given on pp. 88–9 shows that in only four counties is the number of holdings provided under the Act of 1907 sufficient to provide for more than 4 per cent. of the labourers. In these counties, Huntingdon, Bedford, Cambridge, and Worcester, the increased number of small holdings is due to the development of the market-garden type of holding. In these particular localities the market-garden holding does not necessarily, or indeed often, lead on to the large farm. In the counties in which the large farm unit prevails not more than about 2 per cent. of the total labourers can obtain holdings. With a further increase of holdings conditions might be improved, but the very conception of the agricultural ladder excludes the possibility of holding out hopes to many employees. Labourers who become small holders rarely have any hereditary capital, while most of the farmer class against which they must compete for land have this advantage. Nor if all farms were open to the occupation of erstwhile labourers is there a chance for all of them. To establish the brightest men on small holdings robs the class of its natural industrial leaders, although the small holder frequently remains as the political leader of the labourers with whom he was previously associated.

But perhaps the most important point to consider is whether the small holding provides the necessary training for the management of a large farm. 'Where a man climbs from the allotment to the small holding, and from the small holding to the farm, the early stages frequently have been made possible with the assistance of some subsidiary industry or petty business. During this period, which may last for many years, the cultivator becomes accustomed to making small economies and small cautious investments; in fact, thrift and caution are the key-notes of the management. When the passage is made from the holding of thirty acres or so to 100 acres or more, the cultivator is usually past his

prime as a worker, his mind is stereotyped by his former cautiousness and frugality, and the effect of his life's experience is to make him a very conservative farmer and unprogressive as a business man. The same qualities that make a man successful as a small holder may not make him a good organizer on a large farm, although he may crop and stock his land well and pay his way. While it is essential to hold out some hope of economic and social betterment to farm labourers, this must depend on their getting the greatest possible service from the land. With an extensive development of credit facilities, the process of rising from the position of labourer to that of big farmer might become much more rapid, but this would do nothing to enlarge the man's horizon, and farming has suffered too long from managers with a confined experience and limited vision. The training required to make a successful occupant of a large farm can only be acquired on a large farm, and experience proves that it is the man who has spent the early years of his life in farm service, usually moving about from farm to farm until he rises ultimately to the position of farm foreman, who makes the best use of a large farm. He will have served under many different masters, possibly in several counties, and he will have become familiar with more than one system of management and more than one market. He is used to handling capital and labour on a large scale, and a transaction which may be a great adventure in the mind of a small holder is to him an everyday occurrence.'

This is a most important aspect of the small holding problem. At a time when the application of knowledge to the methods of producing and marketing agricultural commodities is required above everything else, it is essential that the maximum capacity for management should be secured. It is not suggested that this is to be obtained from the present race of managers of medium or large farms; indeed this may be hotly contested. But other means of obtaining this capacity are at least worthy of consideration. A system is needed in which there shall be

greater specialization of function both in management and in labour. It is through such a system that the great advance in industrial production and marketing has been secured. A form of organization might be developed which would hold out to the labourer, and particularly to his children, both hopes of economic and social progress and the attainment of positions of control. This question of the agricultural ladder depends definitely upon the economy of the small holding as a unit of production, and this must be considered more fully elsewhere.

The greatest difficulty is met in a discussion of the moral effects of small holdings. This argument in their favour is almost hoary with age. No greater testimony is needed to the hopelessness into which the ancient peasants fell on the loss of their little holdings than that given by Arthur Young on many occasions. Allotments helped to lift them out of this, and small holdings provide another incentive to the pursuance of those virtues which may be collectively described as thrift. But at the present rate of their establishment small holdings will never provide either the stimuli or the opportunity.

There is also a grave danger amongst small holders that the advantages of industry and thrift may be purchased at too heavy cost. Such continuous application to work as leaves little or no leisure for cultivation of outside interests by the small holder leaves him a hard and narrow character. There are many thrifty small holders with whom advocates of thrift would not desire to live, and such continuous application to work as leaves the younger members of the family without time for rational enjoyment quite often engenders in them a distaste for the life. The allocation of the expenditure of income on small holdings is a matter of considerable importance. Many cultivators recently established find it necessary to watch every penny of expenditure, and to reduce consumption so that capital may be increased. There is no objection to such a course if the period of establishment is not too long, but when the man is determined to climb the ladder and the saving lasts the whole of his

life his family, often especially his wife, suffer a severe limitation of their legitimate desires which does not engender a gracious spirit either towards their mode of life or towards society at large.

But when all has been said for or against the small holding, it is as a unit in production that it must eventually be judged. In the present state of organization obtaining in agriculture it has a strong claim to existence on the grounds that it does help to ensure a fair distribution of wealth produced, that it holds out some hope of advancement to the labourer, and that it provides a basis for moral independence, apart altogether from its claim to existence on its productive capacities. Under some other system of organization of agriculture some other solutions of the problem of wages, of scope for ambition, of freedom of thought and speech, may be found, in which case much of the obscurity which now surrounds the small holding problem will disappear.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF SMALL HOLDINGS IN OXFORDSHIRE.

It is not surprising that the scientific interest of the historian and economist in the small holding arose at the time of the failure of the Agricultural Labourers' Union and their demand for land as one solution of their difficulties.[1] More strictly speaking, the inquiry of the historian has been directed to the discovering of the reasons for the decline of the owning occupiers of land—the 'yeoman farmer',—but this question is intimately allied with that of the small unit of production. In one instance at least the study has turned to a general examination of the problem of small versus large holdings.

It is impossible to touch more than the modern history of agriculture, the movements of the last hundred and fifty years. The small cultivator of that time might be a tenant, a copyholder for a term of years or lives, or of customary inheritance, a leaseholder or a freeholder. Besides these definite forms of property interests, other less clearly defined forms of rights or privileges to the use of landed property existed, especially among the cottar class. And it is most important to distinguish clearly between the cultivator of a holding sufficient to maintain a family whose tenure usually took one of the above definite forms, and the cultivator or grazier who depended mainly upon employment in

[1] The study which aroused interest in this question was that of John Rae, 'Why have the Yeomanry Perished?' *Contemporary Review*, 1883. Attention may also be directed to the following: H. C. Taylor, *Decline of Land-owning Farmers in England*, 1904; Hermann Levy, *Large and Small Holdings*, 1904 (English edition, 1911); A. H. Johnson, *Disappearance of the Small Landowner*, 1911; H. L. Gray, 'The Yeoman Farmer in Oxfordshire,' *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1911 (vol. xxiv).

agriculture or in some other occupation for his livelihood, whose rights to use of land were often of an indefinite nature.

A close study of the fortunes of the occupying owners of land during the period 1785–1834 was made by Mr. H. L. Gray.[1] After 1785 the number of yeomen increased to some extent. In 1785 they paid 9 per cent. of the land tax; in 1804 they paid 11·3 per cent. But a study of this kind needs to be based on a close distinction between 'village property' and 'agricultural property'. Landed property in the former class includes small fields or closes used for various purposes, mostly grazing, by the village tradesman or the independent resident, while agricultural property may be defined as such units as are held by men who depend mainly upon cultivation for a livelihood. In some parishes outside the county the same increase in the number of occupying owners is shown in the Land Tax Returns from 1790 onwards, but close scrutiny of other records proved that the whole of the increase was in properties which could not be described as agricultural, and that there was an actual decrease in the number of owners occupying land to cultivate it for their maintenance.

Although the proportion of farmers who cultivated their own land in 1785 was very low, there were considerable variations from the county average in certain districts. In forty-eight parishes the occupying owners paid 27 per cent. of the land tax, and in ninety parishes no occupying owners were found. But from the point of view of the modern study of small holdings in the county the most important fact is that the area in which yeoman farmers were most numerous in the eighteenth century are those in which small holdings are chiefly found at the present time. Mr. Gray states that 'in the Chiltern region are fewest yeoman townships', and in this region few small holdings are found. On the other hand yeomen were numerous in the neighbourhood of Otmoor, in a district directly south-east of Oxford, and in the north-west of the county, from

[1] *Op. cit.*

Banbury to the spurs of the Cotswolds. In the neighbourhood of Otmoor, and also of Littlemore, Nuneham, and Dorchester, small holdings are still comparatively numerous. In some parts of the north-western districts small holdings and small farms are to be found, but greater changes seem to have occurred there than in other neighbourhoods in which yeoman farmers were numerous in the eighteenth century. The figures given by Mr. Gray for yeoman farmers in Oxfordshire do not, of course, indicate the number of small holders in the county, as some owners might occupy large farms, while some small cultivators would be tenants. But there is some connexion between the old yeoman holdings and the modern persistence of the small unit of cultivation, which is found, perhaps, as much in the tradition and spirit of the people as in the existence of the unit of land. In the neighbourhood of Otmoor, where the commoners made a valiant fight for their rights or privileges, there still exist persons who prefer to struggle for a living with a little land, a horse or cow, and a number of poultry, rather than earn an equal income as employees. At the beginning of the nineteenth century men in this neighbourhood could sometimes make as much as £20 a year by geese and poultry. In the neighbourhood of Baldon, where Arthur Young noticed that many cottagers had two, three, or four acres of land, there are still many families which continue to obtain a somewhat precarious living by cultivating a few acres of vegetables, supplemented by laundry work done by the wives.

In Mr. Gray's opinion enclosure was not the cause of the disappearance of the yeoman cultivator. 'Most of the evidence seems to indicate that enclosure was the registering of a *fait accompli*; and was dependent upon the engrossing of estates and the breakdown of the old field system.' Economic forces and not the peculiar nature of economic institutions led to the destruction of the small holding. However this may be, there is abundant evidence that the economic standard of the cottager was lowered during the period 1780 to 1834, and that in particular he lost much

direct connexion with the land. Unemployment became rife and labour was pauperized. But sympathy with the condition of the poorer classes must not blind us to the substantial progress that was made. The time was one of agricultural advancement. Many people were improving stock, others were inquiring into the advantages of different systems of cropping, and nearly every one wanted to find economical methods of production, or, as Arthur Young put it, to 'go the nearest way to work'. When new methods had proved to give practical results it was essential that they should be adopted in general practice. Then, as now, the problem of educating numbers of managers of small, scattered holdings in the advanced methods of production seemed almost insoluble. The solution adopted was to engross the holdings and place them under the control of the men who had shown their capacity to meet the new demands arising out of the conditions of the times. There is a good deal to be said about the ways in which enclosures were carried out during the Napoleonic wars; but at a time when population was increasing rapidly it would have been almost impossible for Britain to have fed her people and to have forged her way through military and naval ordeals to her subsequent position in world politics without the increased and cheaper production made possible by the Enclosure Acts. A note of Arthur Young's on the psychology of the Oxfordshire farmers of the time goes direct to one of the chief points. 'They are now in the period of a great change in their ideas, knowledge, practice, and other circumstances. Enclosing to a greater proportional amount than in almost any other county in the kingdom, has changed the men as much as it has improved the country: they are now in the ebullition of the change: a vast amelioration has been wrought and is working; and a great deal of ignorance and urbanity remains. The Goths and Vandals of the open field touch the civilization of the enclosures. Men have been taught to think, and till that moment arrives, nothing can be done effectively. When I passed from the conversation of the farmers I was recom-

mended to call on, to that of men whom chance threw in my way, I seemed to have lost a century in time, or to have moved 1,000 miles in a day. Liberal communication, the result of changed ideas, was contrasted with a dark ignorance under the covert of wise suspicions.... The old open field must die off before the new ideas can become generally rooted.' The time may come when another Arthur Young may make similar declarations against the controllers of the present system of farm organization which superseded the old open field system.

A careful study of the literature of the subject, consideration of the conformation of holdings, and of other matters, lead to the following conclusions on the reasons for the decline of the small cultivator:

1. That some of his property rights were of intangible character and may have been lost on enclosure or on any occasion of dispute.

2. That when allotments were made on enclosures the overhead and direct expenses of the process fell more heavily on small than large owners.

3. That the cottar class of labourer-cultivators was adversely affected by the fall of real wages at the close of the eighteenth century, when they were obliged to sell or mortgage their small properties to live.

4. That under the system of subsidizing the wages of labour by poor rates, small occupying owners or tenants whose families cultivated their own holdings without employing outside labour suffered from a system which they were compelled to support, but from which they received no benefit.

5. That in the case of the owner-occupier of a small economic holding various causes led to mortgages during the period of high prices; among these were the cost of enclosures, where effected, the cost of improvements, the desire to purchase more land, or the necessity of paying patrimony; and during periods of falling prices these mortgages were a grave source of weakness.

6. That some owners were induced to sell their holdings,

sometimes for the purpose of investing in other industries, but more often to occupy larger farms as tenants, because capital invested in farm stock was more productive than capital invested in land. The opportunity was provided in a measure through the demand for land on the part of capitalists for secure investment of money or for the establishment of social position.

7. High grain prices made arable farming the most profitable system, and that as considerable economies could be made by large-scale production, effective competition by the small holder with the larger tenant in the payment of rent was impossible.

8. That the period 1790 to 1845 was one of frequent and disruptive changes in prices in which only the strong and alert man in any of the classes of [illegible]aters could maintain his position.

9. In general, that the period 1760 to [illegible] was one in which there was almost universal movement towards a system of large-scale production and that on a tenancy basis; and also that during this time not only systems but the personnel of agricultural organization were submitted to rigid tests, as new and strong competitive forces were rapidly clearing away all customary supports and defences.

Most important of these causes were those which had to do with production, the economy of the use of capital and labour on large farms, and the application of new ideas by competent managers. It was on the side of production that most people viewed with favour the introduction of the large farm unit. Among the advantages of enclosures in Oxfordshire it was said that they led to better use of arable land. Imposing no restrictions on the system of husbandry, they led to economy of labour of men and draught animals and better supervision of labour; they led to better conditions for stock both in breeding and in maintaining health, to drainage and the permanent improvement of land and the prevention of disputes. But when enclosures had been effected there were still arguments in favour of engrossing farms. In 1809 Arthur Young was of opinion

that Oxfordshire farms 'were too small to be consistent with good husbandry'. The economy of large farms in the employment of capital and labour, and the ability to command competent managers in the production of agricultural staples, wheat, beef, mutton, and wool, was indisputable, and these staples loomed large in the public consideration. There was ample room for improvement in the county. In some districts the land only bore one crop in two years, in others two crops in three years. But people were experimenting with longer courses, and many were improving cattle and sheep. Such improvements called for the capable manager whom only the larger farm could command. Just before the opening of the Napoleonic wars Richard Davis gave a consideration of other points of view:

'As to the monopoly of farms, it is a common but narrow policy in land-owners to throw several small bargains into one, in order to save some expense in buildings. It is seldom seen that very large farms are cultivated at as great an advantage as smaller ones; besides, they naturally tend to increase the poor rates by rendering all labourers who cannot afford to be farmers, and annihilating a very useful order of men, the small farmers; whose attachment to their country must be of course greater while they continue masters of some property, in their stock of cattle or corn, than when, by being reduced to labourers, they are without possessions. The price of every lesser article of production, which was formerly brought to market by this description of men, is consequently raised, by diminishing the sources of its growth and produce; such articles being beneath the notice of the opulent farmer.'[1]

He also believed that one of the means of improvement was 'preventing the monopoly of farms, which is the greatest evil attending on enclosures'. Here are three distinct arguments. The first is that the new system disturbed the existing balance of the distribution of wealth, making the cottager poorer, at least in comparison with the employer and the owner of land; next, that the propertyless labourer was less valuable as a citizen than the small cultivator; and

[1] Richard Davis, *Survey of Oxfordshire*, 1794. Printed for the Board of Agriculture.

lastly, that there was a place for the small holder in production in the sphere of producing poultry, butter, cheese, bacon, and sundry vegetables.

The new system did enable the operator to produce more cheaply, but he also produced more. A nation with an increasing population, or which does not produce sufficient food to provide for itself, cannot afford to adopt a cheap system of production which yields less in commodities than that which exists. But if it can organize a new system which produces more commodities at a smaller unit cost, it cannot afford to neglect it. On the establishment of such a system it may proceed to devise methods of distribution which will satisfy demands. Nor must it be forgotten that a system of distribution which works well with a stationary population will be put out of pace by a rapid increase in the people to be provided for. Efficiency in production is then more important than balance in distribution, and if the larger farm system did not secure to the cottager class its due share of the increased prosperity, it was on the side of distribution it failed; and hence most of the criticism of the movement. The argument that property was necessary for good citizenship was important, and still remains so in regard to rural districts. It does not, however, follow that the control of productive property is necessary for good citizenship in all areas, and only the abuse of property by possessors can make it necessary in rural areas. It is a unique position which makes property rights necessary to combat the abuse of property power. Davis's plea for the small farm on the ground that it produced 'the lesser articles' was a strong one. Some small holdings survived where they found a market for varied produce, but most of them vanished. And the neglect of the methods of producing and marketing such commodities proved a grave source of weakness to the large farm at a later period when the great industrial market for more common luxuries was opening up, and overseas producers entered the market for agricultural staples with cheap supplies. The question whether the large unit of cultivation can compete with the smaller in the production

of eggs, poultry, butter, vegetables, &c., is one which need not be considered historically. Modern examples should provide more effective illustrations. Arthur Young was a great enthusiast for the improvement of production of the great staples. Richard Davis saw more of the social considerations involved in the question of the place of the small holdings in the rural economy of Oxfordshire.[1] In subsequent years Young's views were adopted most generally by those who determined the agricultural policy of the county.

During the time that these changes in agriculture were proceeding, the system of large-scale production in industry was advancing at a more rapid rate. The workers were separated from capital, and depended on their wages alone. Out of this separation grew all those new institutions in urban life, the trade union, the friendly society, and the co-operative store. These movements, however, were not allowed to develop without opposition, and on occasions the urban workers turned longing eyes to what they regarded as the ideal conditions of self-supporting independence on the soil. One of these aberrations resulted in the Charterville colony of small holdings at Minster Lovell.

This colony sprang direct from the Chartist movement of the 'forties'. As the political aims of the movement showed signs of failure the various leaders went off at tangents, following the idea which appealed most to their sentiments or prejudices. Some followed the ideal of education, others of temperance reform, yet others went into the trade union or co-operative movements. Fergus O'Connor appears to have remained loyal to the political ideals of Chartism, his one variation being in favour of peasant holdings. At a convention held in 1845 the Chartists' Co-operative Land

[1] The county agricultural surveys published by the old Board of Agriculture were made in every case in duplicate. The first one was printed in quarto, with wide margins, and circulated amongst prominent agriculturists for their comments. It was then re-written, and issued to the public. The re-writing was rarely entrusted to the author of the first survey, which was sometimes ignored altogether. In the case of Oxfordshire, Richard Davis made the first survey, and Arthur Young the second.

Company was formed, but later the name was changed to that of the National Land Company. The rules provided that members should subscribe by instalments of 3*d.* or 6*d.* per week, according to their ability, for shares in the company. Each share was of the value of £2 10*s.*, but a share and a half or two shares might be taken. Land was to be purchased by members' subscriptions, and after purchase any holder of one share was entitled to ballot for a holding of two acres, the holder of a share and a half for one of three acres, and the holder of four shares for one of four acres.

Most of the members were men from towns, especially London and the northern industrial areas, who had no knowledge of agriculture. They were told in florid language of the joys of country life, and the independence to be gained on a small holding. They were definitely promised a profit of £44 per year, 'after consumption of the best of good living . . . estimated at a low rate of value at 17*s.* per week'. The total number of days' work estimated to be necessary in each year to produce these results was 157.

Eventually three estates were bought in the midland counties, the largest of which was at Minster Lovell, in Oxfordshire. For 102 holdings carved out of these estates there were no less than 26,000 subscribers who had a right to ballot. The Minster Lovell estate consisted of 297 acres and a farm-house. The price paid was £11,094,[1] and was subject to an annual tithe rent-charge of £89 16*s.*, the net price per acre being over £37. Part of the land is of light character and rather thin, and part more heavy. The reason such a high price was paid was partly that the subscribers to the Company increased at such a rate that there was a heavy demand for holdings, and partly, no doubt, to the lack of experience of the directors of the enterprise. Subsequently just over 44 acres and the homestead were sold, and the amount of land divided was 250½ acres. This was cut up into 34 holdings of 4 acres, 16 of 3 acres, and 30 of 2 acres each, making a total of 80 holdings. The

[1] Mr. Doyle stated £9,539; see Cd. 3875, 1881, pp. 68–80.

land was divided, the road made, cottages built, and the holdings ploughed and manured by the Company. In addition to the land and buildings, each allottee was entitled to a sum of working capital at the rate of £7 10*s.* per acre. The cottages cost £120 each, but it was commonly said that the price was too high for value, and that such cottages could have been built for £80 or £100 each. According to the conditions of membership, the allottee was to become the possessor of the freehold in twenty-one years on payment of £3 6*s.* per acre per annum. But in practice the tenure of the allottee was soon reduced to one of leasehold, although it was uncertain what the legal position would be owing to the lack of legality in the constitution of the whole concern. Absolute permanency of tenure was secured subject to an annual rent-charge of £2 10*s.* per acre. The capital advanced bore interest at 5 per cent.

Within a short time of the establishment of Charterville it was discovered that the Company was illegal on account of the lottery principle in the ballot for holdings. An attempt to legalize the Company was made by applying for registration under the Friendly Societies Act, but this was refused. Later, a Bill to legalize the Company was brought before Parliament, and this also failed. To make conditions worse, the estate had never been the full property of the Company. So far as is known, the purchase-price, or part of it, was advanced by friends of the project, and when trouble arose these people foreclosed their mortgages. Consequently the estate was sold. The liquidator of the Company wished to buy, but was forbidden to do so; the solicitor for the Company eventually bought its rights, and a number of the holdings were sold by auction.

When this took place a number of the leaseholders of urban origin returned to industrial employment, which they were wise to do, if some of the stories told by the indigenous labourers can be believed, whilst some few of the original holders were able to purchase their holdings. After this settlement of the estate some of the cultivators were freeholders, others the owners of permanent leases

subject to the rent-charge, and others were tenants under owners of freeholds or leases. At this time the rent-charge was reduced to £9 10*s.* per annum on four acres, and a very liberal grace for payment was allowed. The men who became cultivators after the reorganization were mostly men from the country, agricultural labourers or men of some rural occupation, but it does not necessarily follow from the breakdown of the original scheme that the men from the towns could not have succeeded. Their failure was due to the embarrassment in which they were placed by the peculiar form of the Company, as well as to their own incapacity as cultivators.

From about 1858 to 1887 the colony settled down to the most prosperous period in its chequered history. The farmers in the neighbourhood were not then producing potatoes, and as good quality tubers could be produced in the colony land a considerable quantity was grown. In 1872 the cottagers were selling potatoes to the value of between £30 and £40 per acre. Wages in the district were low, cash wages being about 10*s.* per week in summer and 9*s.* in winter. The hours were from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. in winter, and one hour longer in summer. Consequently there was a fairly strong demand for the holdings. The rent of a four-acre plot and a cottage varied between £14 and £17 10*s.*, and there was a keen demand for purchase, mostly among small business men in the neighbourhood, who wanted an investment for surplus capital. Prices were high, a cottage and four acres sometimes making as much as £320, while a leaseholder's interest sold at this time for £130.

Then, like all cultivators, the small holders of Charterville suffered from the depression, but not for the same reasons. Up to the end of the 'seventies' they had been allowed nearly a monopoly of the local potato market, a good demand was found, especially in Oxford. But the depression necessitated changes in the old order of cropping, the farmers began to grow potatoes, the local market was soon overstocked, and the small holders' produce, being in small quantities, did not readily find its way into wider markets. Then, in 1881 and

1882, potatoes suffered severely with disease, and some of the small holders were brought almost to ruin.

By this time there had been some little engrossing of holdings. By 1882 the number of the four-acre holdings had risen to thirty-nine, an increase of five. But none of the holdings seem to have been sufficient to support a family. Some of the cultivators had a little business of some kind; most were agricultural labourers. These did 'odd jobs', hoeing and harvesting, they went up towards London for haymaking, and as a rule they were not day-labourers. They were, however, 'picked agricultural labourers', because only the very best men—'a man who could work six hours after he had done his other work in the day and had his wits about him'—could succeed there. 'At times they will work before they go to work in the morning, and they will work in the evening when they come home occasionally.' 'Very commonly they work two or three hours in the evening.' By picked men is meant 'strong young men who have their wits about them'. 'The average man could not do it.' Nobody could doubt the strength of such men, but judgements on their wits may differ. Still, this experience shows the tenacity with which men cling to a country cottage and a few acres of land. It is open to grave doubt, however, whether men would have been willing to do this had employment been plentiful and wages adequate to provide for a family in decency. One cultivator of four acres appeared before the Richmond Commission on Agriculture in 1882. He stated that he went on the holding because wages were low, and he thought 'if I went and took some land I should better my position; but I got deceived'. According to his balance sheet he was making a profit of over £22 per year from his holding, or, counting his own labour, was enjoying a total income of over £29 from four acres.

During the next few years the value and rent of holdings were falling. In 1888 the rent of four acres and a cottage varied between £10 and £12. When subject to rent-charge, the lower rent left a margin of 10*s.* for the annual value of the leaseholder's interest. At this time the capital value of

a leaseholder's interest was from £30 to £50, according to the state of the holding. But in spite of the fall in rent and value people in the neighbourhood were still anxious to purchase both freeholds and leaseholds. Land in large farms in the neighbourhood was let at about 25*s*. to 30*s*. per acre, some at a much lower rate, and some was nearly derelict. The glebe allotments, without cottages, were let at 30*s*. per acre. The reason for the demand for the Charterville holdings, whether leasehold or freehold, was that the purchaser felt that the place was his own and he could not be turned out; whatever happened in the economic world he had the security of subsistence, and if it was at any time advantageous to remove, he was able to secure the advantage of any improvements he had made. Also, part of the demand was due to the neighbourhood of Witney, where people, shopkeepers and so on, had a little money to invest. This type of demand for small properties pays little attention to the comparative urn of other classes of investments till the meagre rent makes itself felt in actuality. Then an attempt is often made to improve the investment by increasing rent.

In 1889 there were thirty-three freeholders, nine leaseholders, and eighteen tenants. Of the thirty-three freeholders twenty-one owned thirty of the original holdings. There were altogether sixty cultivators of the eighty plots. The other cottages were let at about £2 10*s*. per year or used as store-rooms. By this time some few cultivators held as many as ten or twelve acres. Still, few if any of the men depended solely upon the land for their maintenance. At the present time there are twenty-six occupying owners, a few of whom are leaseholders, and altogether there are sixty-nine occupiers. So occupation has been somewhat divided since 1889, while occupying ownership has diminished. By 1867 only two of the original allottees remained on the colony, and these appear to have remained till within a comparatively recent period. Since about 1860 most of the property has been owned by natives of the locality, and the cultivators have been drawn mostly from the class of local agricultural labourers. However, the colony has always

attracted a few urban dwellers, chiefly from the London area. These come with great hopes raised by reading extravagant articles on small holdings in the daily press or elsewhere, generally to meet with bitter disappointment, and sometimes with absolute failure. Their story is analogous to that of the shepherd boy who saw a distant house with golden windows as he drove his flock to his hill-side home every evening. His house was drab and his life was dull so he determined to seek the golden house. Early in the morning he started off and reached his destination just in time to see as he looked back the effect of the sun turning into gold the windows of the house he had left, while those he had been so anxious to see were covered with dust and cobwebs. A serious responsibility rests upon those whose writings send these men out on their quest.

Opinions as to the results of the Charterville colony differ widely. An Assistant Commissioner of the Richmond Commission on Agriculture said that—

'No one who fairly considers the result of this experiment can doubt that not only has it completely failed to realize the promise of its promoters, but that it furnishes no reasonable ground of encouragement for schemes of a similar character. The utmost that can be said in its favour is that in a few exceptional cases the condition of the small occupier, having security of tenure, has called out qualities which in other circumstances would probably have lain dormant, energy, perseverance, unflagging industry, readiness of resource, hopeful endurance of hardships greater than any to which the average agricultural labourer is ordinarily subjected. . . . The least successful of such cases illustrate, as the condition of whatever success they may have had, the inevitable tendency to the consolidation of holdings. "I cannot do upon a four-acre allotment, but if I had ten acres at a reasonable rent I think I could hold my ground" expresses the general feeling of the more sanguine occupiers.'

The late vicar of the parish, who knew more about actual conditions on the colony and had given greater attention to the problems it had to face than any other person living or dead, held other views. He said the colony supported a great nur ber of people, about 300 in fact, or 250 more than it

would support as a large farm, and that the cultivators and their families were physically and mentally superior to the average labourer in the vicinity. Even allowing for the partial maintenance of families by extraneous sources of income, and the superiority of the people due to the process of selection involved, this opinion cannot be entirely refuted. One unlooked-for result of the holdings was to make their cultivators better employees. 'I have been astonished at the speed at which these men work, as compared with the ordinary agricultural labourer,' said the vicar. 'I have said to one of them who worked for me, "How is it you work so splendidly? You do too much work," and he said, "We get into this way of working for ourselves and we cannot stop it." And they are better fed and conditioned altogether.' This effect of small holdings has been noticed elsewhere,[1] and there can be no doubt as to its reality. Lest this should seem to be in contradiction of considerations put forward in the study of allotments, two considerations should be stated. These men were not regular labourers, but only intermittently employed, mostly on piece-work or the better-paid day-work. Also their cottages were on their plots, and when they went to work in the evenings they had not to walk half a mile or so before beginning the actual task.

Next to the increase and improvement in population, the most striking aspect of the vicar's views of the colony was that it had withstood the onslaught of the depression much better than the large farms in the vicinity. 'The saying in the neighbourhood is that the big men have gone to the wall. The biggest of our farmers, one after another, have gone to the wall; men who were thought a good deal of; but the small holders and other small farmers have held their own through all.' The rents of the plots did not fall more than £1 or £2 for four acres, while some large farms had to be taken over by landlords. The reasons for superiority of the small holding in a time of depressed prices are not far to seek. One reason was that the cultivators were growing potatoes, a crop which had not appealed to

[1] Cf. F. E. Green, *The Awakening of England*, p. 104.

the farmers. The real reason, however, was that the colonists were largely producing for their own consumption. Although their system of cultivation might cost them more in energy than that of the large farmers they had few cash outgoings. Two of their chief products, bacon and potatoes, were large items in their dietary, and the fall in prices did not affect their position. And in so far as they were employees and the fall in wages was not equal to the fall in prices, their position in this respect was improved. At the end of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, the rise in prices with a fall in real wages was far more disastrous to small cultivators partly dependent on some other source of income than an equal fall in prices would have been.

It is open to question whether the vicar's criterion of success, namely, the ability to support themselves, is a proper one, and many people will feel that a rural community based on the principle of self-sufficiency cannot be held to justify itself in the face of the demand for food from the great industrial population of the country.

The experience of the Charterville colony led the vicar of Minster Lovell to become a consistent advocate of the system of perpetual leasehold as a form of tenure for small holdings. It enabled the poor who could not purchase freeholds to become virtual owners with power to use their land according to their own judgement, and to secure for themselves all the value of their improvements. Had the lessor been some public body interested in the continuity of small holdings he could have improved conditions regarding subletting, as a guarantee against collection of control either of possession or use, into the hands of a few persons. Also he could secure that the land should be used for its original purpose. Some necessity for securing the proper distribution of possession is showing itself in the colony, for individuals are anxious to purchase a number of plots, and have indeed done so. Some other aspects of the Charterville holdings will be considered in a later section.[1]

[1] See Ch. IV, *post*.

No statistical evidence exists as to the fortunes of small holdings from 1834–85. In the later years, however, statistics were collected, and the conditions since that date are indicated in the following table:

NUMBER OF SMALL HOLDINGS IN OXFORDSHIRE AT VARIOUS PERIODS.

Size of Holdings.	1885.[1]		1890.[2]		1895.[3]	1906.[4]	1912.[5]	
1-5 acres .	...	1,174	...	1,819[6]	...	1,016	996	983	952
5-20 „ .	953	...	1,046	...	1,081	...	...	...	...
20-50 „ .	542	...	557	...	555	...	...	...	...
5-50 „ .	...	1,495	...	1,603	...	1,636	1,535	1,566	1,733
Total number 1-50 acres .	...	2,669	...	3,422	...	2,752	2,501	2,549	2,685

[1] Cd. 4848, 1886. [2] Cd. 6144. [3] Cd. 8243, 1896.
[4] Cd. 3408, 1907. [5] Cd. 6597, 1913.
[6] Cd. 3408 gives 1,549 instead of this figure. There may have been a little difference in the classification used for the compilations.

In the group of holdings of from one to five acres in extent the most remarkable movements were an increase of 345 between 1885 and 1890, and a larger decrease between 1890 and 1895. No reason can be assigned for these movements, though there must have been some disturbing factor. They do not represent a landslide, and no class seems to have been severely affected by them, but such considerable movements in a short period are remarkable. Similar movements have occurred in other counties, but in no case have they been so important as in Oxfordshire. This movement over the county area has in reality continued since 1895, for although the general figures remain stationary, over 100 holdings, mostly in this class, have been established on the Carterton colony.

The groups of holdings between five and twenty acres and twenty and fifty acres in extent show a slight increase between 1885 and 1895. But taking the holdings as grouped in recent statistics, as between five and fifty acres, there was an increase of over 100 holdings between 1885 and 1890, a decrease of the same number between 1895 and 1903, and an increase of 167 between 1906 and 1912. The last

increase corresponds in some degree to the number of holdings established by the County Council, but the other movements are somewhat puzzling. Very intimate local knowledge would be required before making attempts to give reasons for them, but they serve to show that the individual small holding is by no means a permanent economic institution.

No complete figures for the indication of the acreage under small holdings in 1890 are available, but such as there are show a slight decline in the acreage of the one to five acre group, and a steady, considerable increase in the acreage of the five to fifty acre group since 1885. The details are as follows:

ACREAGE UNDER SMALL HOLDINGS AT VARIOUS PERIODS.

Size of Holdings.	1885. *Acres.*		1895. *Acres.*		1912. *Acres.*
1-5 acres	3,050	...	3,029	...	2,841
5-20 ,, . . 10,508	...	11,740	...	...	...
20-50 ,, . . 17,876	...	18,371	...	...	...
5-50 ,, ...	28,384	...	30,111	...	35,480
Total . ..	31,434	...	33,140	...	38,321

The statistics of occupying ownership of small holdings show a decline in the total number owned by occupiers in all classes together, which is due to the decline in the proportion of holdings owned by occupiers in the five to fifty acre group. In 1890, 18·2 per cent. of the holdings in this group were owned, but the proportion had fallen to 14·6 per cent. in 1912. On the other hand, the proportion of holdings owned by occupiers in the one to five acre group has increased. In 1890 the percentage was 13·7 (or 16 per cent. if the figure for total number given in Cd. 3408, 1907, is used), while it is now 19·9 per cent. Particulars are given in the following table.

Pasture holdings predominate over both arable and mixed holdings in the one to five and the five to twenty acre groups, as they constitute considerably more than half the total number of holdings and even more than half the acreage. But in the twenty to fifty acre group the mixed

NUMBER OF SMALL HOLDINGS OWNED BY OCCUPIERS AT VARIOUS PERIODS.

	1 *to* 5 *Acres.*			5 *to* 20 *Acres.*			20 *to* 50 *Acres.*			5 *to* 50 *Acres.*		
	Total number.	Owned by Occupiers.	Partly rented and partly owned.	Total number.	Owned by Occupiers.	Partly rented and partly owned.	Total number.	Owned by Occupiers.	Partly rented and partly owned.	Total number.	Owned by Occupiers.	Partly rented and partly owned.
1890.[1]	1,819	250	...	1,046	210	...	557	90	...	1,603	300	...
1895.	1,016	212	22	1,081	196	60	555	71	40	1,636	267	100
1912.	953	188	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,733	254	...

[1] Or 1,549, according to Cd. 3408, 1907.

holdings predominate. It is in this group that the genuine small peasant holdings which are included in the group of agricultural holdings of under fifty acres in extent are to be found. A considerable proportion of the 400 holdings in this class would be found to be practically self-supporting. But the statement that there are 2,685 small holdings in the county, a statement which might be made after a hasty perusal of the *Agricultural Returns*, would be very misleading, to say the least. The majority of these holdings should be described as purely accommodation land, for the use of tradesmen and sometimes of people of independent means. They seem to consist for the most part of little plots of grass occupied in connexion with another business. The wheelwright and the builder, for example, have small orchards in which they stack timber and the like, and sometimes graze their horses; other people have small plots of grass which they may mow, or graze with a pony or a cow, without depending upon them for a livelihood. In one large agricultural parish in which, according to the poor rate assessment, there appeared to be a large number of small holdings, it was found that over forty of such plots were let to tradesmen in a small town adjoining. This happens more or less in every parish in which there is a population of 400 or over.

Not infrequently, too, a number of so-called small holdings are nothing more than the component parts of a large farm.

The figures indicating the nature of holdings are given in the following table. It is unfortunate that more recent returns of the number of different classes of stock maintained on small holdings cannot be obtained.

CROPS AND LIVE STOCK ON SMALL HOLDINGS, 1885 AND 1895.

1885.	1 to 5 Acres.		5 to 20 Acres.		20 to 50 Acres.	
Nature of Holdings.	*No. of holdings.*	*Acreage.*	*No. of holdings.*	*Acreage.*	*No. of holdings.*	*Acreage.*
Permanent pasture .	673	1,678	493	5,187	142	4,331
Wholly arable . .	370	968	181	1,963	68	2,186
Partly pasture and partly arable . .	131	304	279	3,358	332	11,359
Stock.	*Real No.*	*No. per acre.*	*Total No.*	*No. per acre.*	*Total No.*	*No. per acre.*
Horses used solely for agriculture, unbroken colts and brood mares	297	0·1	632	·06	1,002	·06
Cows and other cattle .	503	·17	2,121	0·2	3,725	0·2
Sheep and lambs . .	852	·29	1,617	·15	5,130	·28
Pigs	2,523	·85	3,363	·32	3,098	·17

1895.	1 to 5 Acres.	5 to 20 Acres.	20 to 50 Acres.
Nature of Holdings.	*No. of holdings.*	*No. of holdings.*	*No. of holdings.*
Wholly permanent pasture	504 ...	520 ...	187
Wholly arable . .	345 ...	169 ...	59
Partly arable and partly pasture . .	167 ...	392 ...	302
Stock. (No records.)			

The present position as to the size of holdings in the county is as follows:

SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS IN OXFORDSHIRE.

Group.	*No. of Holdings.*	*Acreage.*	*Approx. Average Size, Acres.*
1-5 acres ...	953 ...	2,841 ...	3
5-50 " ...	1,733 ...	35,480 ...	20
50-300 " ...	1,399 ...	207,682 ...	148
Above 300 " ...	377 ...	165,533 ...	439

The most important question arising out of the consideration of the history of small holdings is why the process of capitalizing agricultural production and engrossing farms did not go farther? If, as Arthur Young once said, 'Deduct from agriculture all the practice that has made it flourishing and you have precisely the arrangement of small farms,' then why did the small farms remain? The answer to this question is by no means simple. After Arthur Young's time small cultivators who remained did adopt such of the new practices as were available for their holdings. Some of them were able to stand all the tests imposed by the conditions of the first half of the last century by finding a system of production and a market which suited their units of holding. While the large farmers were concerned mainly with the production of corn, beef, and mutton, some small holders found a good market for dairy produce and their pigs; others, like the Charterville people, turned to the production of potatoes and other garden crops for their local market. After the depression social feeling turned once more in favour of the small holding. In 1885 Major Craigie stated that 'the tendencies of the day are running counter to the large-farm system in favour a quarter of a century ago'.[1] The managers of the large farms had mastered the principles of production of certain staples during the first three quarters of the century, but they had certainly not risen to the understanding of the broader principles of commercial management. They did not anticipate the flood of wheat let loose by the American railroads, and later they did not realize the part to be played in the market by American beef and Australian mutton. When the great imports came some of them kept to the old courses of production, and it was not for some time after that they realized that a market for milk and garden produce, which ultimately saved many from their difficulties, had long been opening around them. It appears, too, that in many cases the maximum holding for the economical control of the general manager, without specialized assistance, had been

[1] *Journal of the Statistical Society.* March 1885.

reached about 1875. Still, farmers clung to the family unit of management and capital, and agriculture did not draw outside capital as did other industries. Nor did even the farmer's surplus income go to the creation of productive capital. It has been said that 'a rise in the profits of farming may well take the form of extra afternoons off', and this was the general form taken in many instances up to 1878. A farmer's position was judged as much by the number and quality of the hunters he kept as by his balance at the bank. Strange as it may appear, the weakness of the large-farm system arose from the fact that it did not proceed far enough, rather than from any inherent drawbacks. Also, in common with the managers of the smaller farms they had superseded, the managers did not grasp the new conditions which were arising around them. Staggering blows appear to be necessary to drive ideas into the minds of a generation of farmers following a settled practice in production and marketing. Had farming developed the system of management common in other industries, of general, commercial, and financial managers, with specialists in production in control of sections of the business, the troubles which arose and ways of meeting them might have been partly foreseen and the depression robbed of much of its force. It might also have enabled the labourers to develop some form of industrial organization which would have solved the troubles of the class to a far greater degree than will be possible with small holdings for many years to come. As it was, public trust in the system was shaken both on the side of production and distribution of wealth, and the State has turned to small holdings for a partial redress of its grievances.

CHAPTER III

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDINGS

OXFORD must be regarded as one of the large-farm counties. Farms of 300 acres or over account for more than 40 per cent. of the total acreage, whereas the acreage covered by farms of this extent for the whole of England and Wales is only 24 per cent.; and since medium-sized farms, ranging from 50 to 300 acres, also claim a greater percentage both of the total number of holdings and of the acreage than in most counties, it follows that small holdings of from one to fifty acres must be unusually few or small. In fact, holdings of from five to fifty acres cover 8 per cent. of Oxfordshire as against 14 per cent. of England and Wales. There are over 7,000 'agricultural holdings' in the county, of which about 6,800 are 'farmed for business'. But the census of occupations shows that a large proportion of these holdings cannot be regarded as units of agricultural production. Including both males and females, there are 2,010 'farmers and graziers' in the county, and this number would include all small holders whose main occupation was the cultivation of land. Nurserymen, &c., number 216, and market-gardeners 315, but the latter figure includes some employees. Thus there are about 2,500 persons mainly occupied in the direction of agricultural and horticultural businesses. The difference between this number and that of holdings is due partly to the grouping of more than one holding under one manager, and to the use of other holdings as adjuncts to other businesses. The importance of the latter is clearly seen on an examination of the occupations of persons who hold small agricultural holdings. Some 360 holdings of this character have been traced in the county, including the tenants of the County Council and the occupiers of the colony holdings

at Charterville and Carterton. The results arrived at are as follows:

PREDOMINANT OCCUPATION OR SOURCE OF INCOME OF OCCUPIERS OF SMALL HOLDINGS.

	Number.		*Per cent. of total.*
Persons living private means	51	...	14
Labourers	59	...	16
Artisans	38	...	10
Small holders (including dairymen, but not poultry specialists)	76	...	21
Market gardeners	28	...	7
Professions	8	...	2
Traders (provision dealers, &c.)	23	...	6
Poultry farmers	16	...	4
Hauliers and carriers	47	...	13
Publicans	20	...	5
Farmers (having annexed small holdings to larger farms)	8	...	2
Unclassified	4	...	0
	360	...	100

A proportion very similar to this would be found amongst all the small holdings, especially amongst those between one and twenty acres in extent. Now obviously the distribution of holdings attached to or used as adjuncts to other business is determined by the location of such business. But soil and climate and the inclinations of the occupier may determine the uses of some holdings. One carrier, for instance, may use a few acres mainly for the production of vegetables which he takes to market in the ordinary course of his business, while another simply raises oats and clover for his horses. A number of the adjunctive holdings are merely pasture land.

Soil and climate and, above all, the nature of the market are the chief causes influencing the distribution of small holdings, though there are other causes of a personal or historical nature.

In the north of the county a red loam ironstone prevails over a considerable area, but the predominant soil is occasionally varied by the presence of sands and clays of various

colours and qualities. A mixed system of farming is followed in which corn and sheep figure prominently and little dairying or market-gardening is done. Although in this area some small holdings in the form of accommodation land exist, genuine peasant cultivators are rare. The fact that the red loam will not produce good quality potatoes—so often the small holder's chief sale crop on light land—may have something to do with this. Also wages have been very low in some parishes in this district, so that the labourer has had no margin for saving to enable him to become a small holder. But the absence of good markets for anything except corn and meat is bound to have considerable influence. The chief market is Banbury, which is so notorious for its poor prices for small produce that farmers in Warwickshire within eight or nine miles of Banbury find it best to send their produce twelve miles to Stratford-on-Avon, or sixteen or eighteen miles to Warwick or Leamington.

Immediately south of this red loam district is a larger tract of country having for its southern boundary a line which runs right across the county from Broughton Poggs to Finmere, via Witney, Bladon, and Kirtlington. The soil varies in depth, texture, and fertility to a considerable degree; but generally speaking it is a loose, dry loam, with occasional sands or clay. In some parts of this district corn and sheep farming are combined, in others a more mixed system is followed. In the neighbourhood of Hailey, Charlbury, Finstock, and Wootton, a considerable quantity of potatoes are grown, being, with barley, the crop chiefly depended upon for sale. In this district a number of old-established holdings are to be found, and a considerable number of the Council holdings have also been established. The majority of these appear to be working successfully in spite of the fact that the marketing facilities are poor.

At the extreme south of the county is the district of the Chiltern Hills where chalk soil prevails, though gravel, clay, and sand all appear in the neighbourhood of the Thames Valley. Here are very few small holdings, except of the type of accommodation land. At Watlington, where four

Council holdings have been established, three of the tenants have other businesses.

Between the chalk and the stone-brash tracts is a large area containing soils of almost every conceivable nature and fertility. The greater part of this district is made up of the alluvial plains in the valleys of the Thames, Cherwell, and Thame. It is here that the bulk of the old-established peasant cultivators are to be found, together with the majority of the County Council holdings.

The small agriculturists of Oxfordshire are unfortunate in that the county does not provide them with many good local markets. For the most part the small towns within and around the county exist to serve the agricultural population. Banbury has some industries, but is not a great consuming centre, and is surrounded by such a large contributing area of agricultural land that it does not call for any special organization of the production of the smaller commodities. Indeed, there are times when organized means for transporting some of these commodities from the district would be beneficial to the producers. The small towns absorb only a meagre supply of the minor products of agriculture, so often the mainstay of the peasant producer. Oxford and Reading are the only large towns within easy reach of the county. Reading is a good centre for milk and for some other commodities, but it is not a great consuming centre like some other industrial towns. Its population is considerable, but the rates of wages are low and the proportion of highly paid artisans is small. In addition, it is surrounded on all sides by agricultural land, some of which, outside the borders of Oxfordshire, is better suited to supply the general run of small produce than is that inside the county boundaries. It is rather surprising, however, that the recent development of the milk trade in the Oxfordshire neighbourhood of Reading has not stimulated the development of more small holdings. In the district of Oxfordshire which adjoins the main road from Bicester to Aylesbury the development of milk production has had this effect. But in the Chiltern district the previous system was largely one of

corn and sheep, or cattle, and the farmers had to effect the necessary changes in management to provide for the production of milk instead. Nor do there seem to have been many small homesteads which the small holder could adapt for his purposes. In addition, some foremen are employed and wages are higher than in any other part of the county. In the other district most of the land is pasture, on which milk production was possible without much change, and wages have not been so high as in the Chiltern region.

The city of Oxford itself is rather abnormal as a market for garden produce; during the University terms the local supply is insufficient to meet the demand, which, however, falls away rapidly during the vacations owing to the migration of a large proportion of the consumers. It is probably on this account the supply of superior garden produce, high-class tomatoes, cucumbers, fruits, flowers, and early vegetables, which command high prices, has hardly been attempted by local small holders, and the bulk comes from elsewhere, notably Covent Garden Market and Evesham. On the other hand, there is often an excess of second-class vegetable produce. Many people have a pony and a few acres of land on which they produce vegetables by common methods and hawk them round the city, or sell to salesmen in the market, while the wife takes in washing, and thus the family makes up a living. Some of the ponies and their male or female drivers coming into the city with a load of green stuff and going out with a load of dirty linen give ocular evidence of rather hard times.

This system by which the vegetable producers gain a living partly through the work of their wives is not wholly satisfactory. It would be better if they had sufficient land to maintain them, pursued up-to-date methods of cultivation, and organized their supplies in sufficient quantities to be in a measure independent of the fluctuations of the Oxford market. The soil and climate conditions in the neighbourhood of the city are favourable, and with a little organized effort market-gardening might become a profitable industry.

The table illustrating the demand for small holdings,

given in the *Introduction* to this study (pp. 88–9), shows that the keenest local demand arises where soil and marketing facilities foster the development of this system in Cambridgeshire, especially the Isle of Ely, Huntingdon, Bedford, and the Holland Division of Lincolnshire. In this district of Oxfordshire some of the producers would never make good employees, because they have never submitted to discipline, and need some occupation which calls for self-reliance. Their self-reliance, however, is not positive and creative, and is apt to be essentially conservative. The climate conditions in the neighbourhood are somewhat similar to those in other market-garden areas, and much of the soil is suitable, so that the bent of these people might be fostered so as to yield beneficial results.

The establishment of a fruit, vegetable, and poultry auction similar to those held, for example, at Stratford-on-Avon, would do much to develop the industry. At present there is no open market. Some years ago there was an early morning market for vegetables, &c., at which growers and buyers met, and prices were fixed in open competition. This has entirely disappeared. The grower must now wait on individual customers, or sell to the shopkeepers and stallholders in the market. There are times when one grower does not know what another is receiving for produce, and only perceives that something is wrong when the shopkeeper makes abnormal demands for his supplies. No doubt there is some rough correlation between local supply and price, but adjustments are not made either quickly or accurately. Some growers have never heard of Covent Garden, except by casually noticing the name on a hamper. One man with nearly forty acres under vegetables never knows the prices ruling in Covent Garden and Evesham, and has never dispatched produce to any other market than Oxford. Besides vegetables there is a considerable consumption of poultry and eggs. At certain seasons poultry go from the neighbourhood of Otmoor to Smithfield only to return to Oxford. The producers are perhaps wise to send to London, but in the end the consumer's price

is raised thereby. An open local market would obviate some of these difficulties, but supplies would have to be sufficient to attract distant buyers if substantial results were to be obtained. Some initiative is needed in planning holdings, in stimulating production, and in organizing the market.

The small holdings of Oxfordshire fall into four groups, according to their origin: the old-established holdings, the Charterville Colony, the Carterton Colony, and the County Council holdings. The bulk of the first class consist of accommodation land, while a few instances of genuine peasant holdings occur. Almost invariably these have been linked up with the holdings established under recent legislation, by the application of the holder for a few additional acres of land. In any case there is no essential difference between the holdings which have been established many years and those established by the County Council. Perhaps men who have long been cultivators possess a more adequate amount of capital than those taking up land for the first time, but this is not very clearly marked.

In March, 1913, the County Council had let 2,963 acres to 195 tenants. The table on p. 132 gives details of the number of holdings of the nine classes into which they may be divided.

Thus out of a total of 195 tenants only 64 can confidently be set down as probably entirely dependent upon their land for their livelihood. As for the remainder, the labourers are so vitally interested in the prosperity of agriculture that in the study of certain questions they would require to be added to this total. Of the other groups the tenants classified as publicans generally depend upon their holdings for a living more than do the members of any other. In many of the small and most of the large villages of Oxfordshire there are two public-houses, in which case the profits are rarely sufficient to maintain a family. Many country publicans are exceedingly well fitted by training and by the possession of capital to become cultivators of small holdings. In a few cases the land they hold is merely

Classification of Tenants.	*Acres over:— and not over:—*	0 5	5 10	10 15	15 20	20 25	25 30	30 35	35 40	40 45	45 50	50 55	55 60	60 65	*Total for classes of holders.*
1. Small holders (including 9 dairy-farmers and 3 poultry farmers)		4	7	10	6	6	6	3	2	2	3	1	1	1	52
2. Hauliers and carriers (including hay and straw, coal and general dealers)		13	15	5	4	1	1	1	...	...	2	...	...	...	42
3. Labourers (including road-men, gamekeepers, and hay-tiers)		29	3	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	33
4. Publicans		7	4	1	2	1	...	...	2	...	2	...	...	...	19
5. Artisans and industrial workers		6	4	4	2	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	18
6. Provision dealers (including grocers, bakers, drapers, &c.)		2	3	3	2	...	...	...	1	1	1	...	...	...	13
7. Farmers (of 130 or 200 acres)		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	2
8. Market-gardeners		5	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	10
9. Clerks and Insurance Agents		...	1	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
10. Unclassified		1	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Total for each size of holding		67	42	27	16	9	7	5	5	5	9	1	1	1	195

accommodation land, but practically always where they have arable land it is well cultivated.

Artisans and industrial workers are generally the tenants of mixed holdings, taken for various reasons. A small builder may have a horse not fully employed by his business, which itself may suffer from slack times; a holding strengthens his economic position, and gives him a profitable employment in his spare time. One man with a horse and eleven acres of arable was very emphatic about the value of his holding to him. Furthermore, many of those who are partly dependent upon a few acres of land look forward, either from inclination or under pressure of circumstances, to a time when their trade will become a secondary or insignificant source of income. Not a few village tradesmen find their work disappearing before invasions of ready-made articles, such as doors, gates, and the like. This is an important aspect of the situation in the case of the haulier and carrier classes, which offers no strikingly novel points for discussion.

But, like most things, the question of the 'part-time' holding has two sides to it: If it is valuable as securing subsidiary and alternative employment for many rural workers, it also involves a risk that the holdings themselves will not be very efficiently cultivated. The personal qualities of the holder, the exigencies of his employment, the degree of help he can obtain from members of his family, and the nature of his holding, are some of the most important factors in determining how far a man can cultivate a holding adequately in his spare time, and the personal element is so important that it would be unwise to venture on any broad generalizations. At the same time the point is so important that the twofold aspect of part-time cultivation cannot be lost sight of without a corresponding failure to grasp the general problem in its relation to the national welfare.

CHAPTER IV

SMALL HOLDINGS COLONIES

I. Charterville

This colony of some eighty very small holdings is situated on a plateau two or three miles from Witney, on the high-road from Oxford to Cheltenham. Part of the soil is light, on limestone, and part of heavier character. The texture, depth, and quality varies to a considerable degree; some of it is heavy enough and sufficiently deep to produce fairly good crops of wheat and beans and also the large varieties of fruit; some is shallow and poor, while yet another portion is a light loam of good depth and quality. The chief crops on the light land for the last forty years have been barley and potatoes, and this land, when not too shallow, is always preferred by the tenants. On the heavier land, wheat, beans, and oats are grown. About the years 1885–90 fruit trees were planted on some holdings, otherwise fruit had not been an object of production, except for domestic consumption. Some market-gardening is done by ordinary out-of-doors methods. The chief products of the holdings are potatoes, pork, bacon, and vegetables. Most of the barley is consumed by pigs, and on some holdings a fairly large amount of feeding-stuffs for the feeding of pigs is purchased.

There was originally a cottage on each holding, but in the process of amalgamation of holdings the occupation of land and cottage is now often separate. Very little of the land is wasted in fencing the holdings, and many of them are divided only by a furrow or mark. A public road passes through part of the colony, the rest is served by a private road, the duty of repairing which devolves upon the occupiers of the holdings served, and is, as might be

anticipated, very poorly carried out. The demand for holdings adjacent to the public road is much stronger than that for those reached by the private one.

Since the reorganization of the colony after the collapse of the original scheme, the holdings have partaken more of the functions of allotments than of small holdings. They have been essentially adjuncts to another source of income, in some periods being very largely occupied by local farm labourers. At the present time some twenty-five holders of the total of sixty-nine may be regarded as small holders in that they depend for the main part of their income on the cultivation of their plots. With the addition of small lots of land outside the colony controlled by the occupiers, the following table gives an idea of the occupations followed by the residents and the amount of land they hold:

Occupation.	*Number.*	*Total Acres.*
Small holders	18	102
Market-gardeners	7	33½
Labourers	18	45
Hauliers	1	4
Artisans and industrial workers	7	21
Traders	6	16
Professional	2	3
Unclassified	10	33½
	69	258

The rents of a four-acre holding and a cottage vary from £12 to £14; a cottage and about half an acre is frequently let for £5, and a cottage alone from £3 to £4. The nearest markets are the small industrial town of Witney, within two or three miles, Oxford thirteen miles, and Cheltenham twenty-two miles. The establishment of a colony of this size at such a distance from markets is a grave disadvantage. Witney is a poor market with a fluctuating demand, and Oxford is more easily reached by growers in its vicinity, while Cheltenham is too far away for the dispatch of small quantities of produce. Thus, in the absence of co-operative effort to reach distant markets the

development of market-gardening is limited, and on holdings of this size some intensive system of production must be pursued if the cultivator is to find sufficient employment and income.

Indeed, the plots have always been too small to maintain a family. Cultivators who have been successful have been those who obtained control of about three or four plots of four acres each, or who obtained grass-land elsewhere. Without grass-land cows have rarely been kept by the occupiers, pigs and horses being almost the only kinds of stock on the holdings. On unfenced arable holdings of this size it is not possible to keep poultry except in confinement. The labourer in regular employment finds it difficult to cultivate more than one acre, even though the cottage is on the holding, while whole-time cultivators need more land. Thus it would be better to consolidate some of the plots and group the land into more economic units. Four acres should be the minimum on this type of land, and in some instances twenty-five acres would not be too much for a family. There is complete absence of formal co-operation amongst the occupiers, although there is occasionally informal co-operation for some purposes. There is also some organization of the supply of implements, &c., by private enterprise. One occupier has a binder which does most of the harvesting, others have horses which are employed on the ploughing for neighbours. But many occupiers keep a pony for the conveyance of produce to markets, and a holding of the prevailing size, unless intensively cultivated, is not sufficient to maintain a horse. The absence of any form of co-operative organization is the more remarkable because the Charterville colony is situated far from any good market, Oxford, the nearest large town, being thirteen miles away. This would be serious enough if it hurt none but the Charterville holders themselves, but it was alleged in the neighbouring colony of Carterton that the Charterville growers, owing to their financial necessities, parted with their produce at prices which gave a very small margin

of profit to others, as well as to themselves. Colonies of uncombined small producers may easily, it is clear, exercise a depressing effect in a small local market; locating holdings in groups has considerable potentialities, but if no advantage is taken of these the possibility of actual evil results is noteworthy. At Charterville an effort was certainly made to form a credit bank two or three years ago, but no society has ever been registered and the enterprise seems to have fallen through.

II. Carterton

The largest colony of small holders in the county is that of Carterton, near Black Bourton, which covers an area of 730 acres. The estate previously consisted of one large compact farm, with a central homestead. It was bought from the Duke of Marlborough over twenty years ago by William Carter, who purchased several estates in other parts of the country for commercial development as residential and small holdings colonies. The scheme was to purchase estates, divide them into plots, make roads, sometimes to build houses, and to sell as freehold either by immediate sale or on an instalment system. This estate has been developed mostly within the last sixteen years, during which time it has been the property of 'Homesteads Limited', with which 'William Carter's Estates' were incorporated. Most of the land now belongs to small freeholders and only a few plots remain in the hands of the Company.

Of 188 items of assessment 141 plots of land and houses are occupied by the owners. The holdings are mostly unencumbered, but Homesteads Limited have mortgages on a few of them. With scarcely any exception the small holders—dairymen, poultry farmers, and gardeners—are freeholders. The estate was divided into very small plots, and in several instances where men have what appear to be fairly large holdings these consist of a number of small plots situated in several quarters of the estate.

Most of the colonists have migrated to the district, some from towns, some returned from the colonies or foreign

countries, and their previous occupations are exceedingly varied. A number are police, army, and private pensioners. A few have businesses elsewhere, and others follow such occupations as that of ship's cook or steward. About one-third of the colonists depend mainly on their holdings for a livelihood. An attempt has been made to classify the various callings, with the following results:

Occupation.	*Number.*
Small holders	14
Poultry farmers	7
Market-gardeners	11
Hauliers, carriers, and higglers	5
Labourers	8
Artisans	13
Traders	4
Professional men	3
Pensioners and living on means	47
	112

The land varies in character from light gravel and light stone-brash to fairly stiff soil on the border of the stone-brash and clay. It will yield from 4 to 6 quarters of barley and oats, from 4 to 6 quarters of wheat, and from 4 to 7 tons of potatoes according to cultivation and season. The general run of crops, however, is 4 to 5 quarters of barley and oats, and from 4½ to 5½ tons of potatoes; only a little wheat is grown. On the heavier land hard fruit yields fairly well, and soft fruit, especially strawberries, are easily cultivated on any of the plots.

Most of the holdings have been vastly improved. Some holders keep as many as five cows on six acres of land, others with only two or three acres manage to keep a small cow of the Jersey or Shorthorn-bred Jersey type per acre. This can only be done by having practically the whole of the land under the plough or spade. In one case, where five cows were kept on six acres, about one acre was under lucerne, on which the cows were kept tethered during the summer months, while oats, roots, and catch crops were grown on the rest of the acreage.

The dairy produce of the colony is practically all sold in the village and the local markets; the poultry produce is disposed of locally, or in London. Much of the market-garden produce, including grapes, tomatoes, and cucumbers grown under glass, is sold locally in Witney, Lechlade, and Oxford, or in the West of England. The colony is, from a marketing standpoint, most unhappily placed. The markets of Cirencester and Cheltenham, not to mention Swindon, would give it an excellent opening, but the railway on which—at a respectful distance of two miles—it is situated, is a blind alley and runs the wrong way. Some of the larger and more energetic growers have managed, even so, to establish profitable connexions in that direction, but they lose greatly by the difficulties of communication.

To the passer-by Carterton has really a colonial air; many of the bungalows were built by their occupants, and are far from pretentious. The whole place has a disjointed, piecemeal look, and is strewn over such a wide area that the noticeable lack of any feeling of corporate identity is hardly remarkable. There is a chapel and a reading-room on the estate, but no public water-supply and no public system of drainage, both of which seem to be needed to some extent.

Here there is certainly a co-operative society formed for agricultural and general distributive business, but it is not very successful. It was formed in 1907 and in 1912 had fifty-nine members and a turnover of £1,548. It could hardly hope for any great success, perhaps, where the marketing situation was such that the most enterprising members sought out private markets which a general trade could not touch.

Thus the most striking point about the small-holding colonies in Oxfordshire is the complete lack of that co-operation which forms such a strong argument for the group system. It would, of course, be a mistake to infer that the amount of formal organization in such an aggregation of units is a measure of the advantage derived from the colony formation. Apart from the gains on the social side, and informal co-operation, the mere placing together of like

holdings may have some good effects. But still the two colonies reviewed seem to be illustrative of a certain waste of possible advantages; and the chance that an unorganized group near a small market may have a most depressing effect upon price levels ought not to be overlooked.

The road question at Charterville, and the water and drainage need at Carterton, point to one of the difficulties which have to be faced in the formation of groups of small holdings. There seems to be a need for careful foreseeing and arrangement for such problems, with the provision of some corporate machinery for dealing with new ones as they arise. Where colonies were laid out cut and dried, as at Charterville, the matter should present no insuperable difficulty, but in the Carterton type of colony, where the group grows up more gradually, such provision for needs far ahead is not so easy. Yet if the matter is allowed to slide, private interests, which retard and make difficult a satisfactory solution, are almost sure to arise.

CHAPTER V

COUNTY COUNCIL HOLDINGS

I. The Stanton Harcourt Group

The nearest approach to a colony of small holders established by the Oxfordshire County Council is the group at Stanton Harcourt. There seventeen tenants hold just over 450 acres of land, the size of the holdings ranging from three to thirty-six acres. Prior to the establishment of these holdings there had been no field allotments in the parish, although some garden allotments exist. Some of the cottages have large gardens, and some other small parcels of land had been open to the occupation of cottagers. In their gardens and elsewhere certain of them had been producing poultry, largely young ducks, for Smithfield, and violets, for Covent Garden Market. The occupiers of the holdings include labourers, gardeners, and hauliers, all of whom possessed some experience of agriculture or horticulture and had some ideals of cultivation.

The soil varies to some extent in nature and quality, but all of it is situated near the rivers Thames and Windrush. This is not exactly an advantage in the case of those portions which are liable to be flooded. The pasture land consists partly of rough grazing which produces little besides rushes, but there are some very productive water-meadows which are held in high esteem, and other pasture is old and of good quality. The arable consists partly of a gravel soil yielding good crops of wheat, barley, oats, peas, and roots, but unsuitable for beans, and partly of a good strong loam which will produce any farm crop. All the arable can be ploughed by two horses, and most of the holders keep that number, which on some holdings do all the work. There is a good deal of informal co-operation

with regard to horses and implements, and work is rarely affected by lack of horse-power, though the holdings are not overstocked with horses. When the cultivators do not possess a horse, as happens in one or two cases, they have an arrangement whereby they give manual labour to other holders in return for horse labour: this appears to work fairly well.

In one case two holders, with twenty-six and thirty-three acres of land respectively, have entered into partnership, and the fifty-nine acres are run as one holding; the capital is pooled, a certain sum is paid weekly to each man as wages, and the profits are divided annually. Each year has shown a slight profit, and a considerable increase in the value of capital equipment. The chief products of the colony are corn, butter, pork, and bacon. A large number of pigs are bred, and egg production and duck fattening are carefully attended to on several holdings. Alongside the production of butter the tenants with pasture rear young cattle.

This group of holdings can scarcely be regarded as a distinct colony. Most of the occupiers live in the village in houses which are unattached to the holdings. This entails great disadvantages. The homes of the cultivators are away from the work and the stock, and it is not to the interest either of the lessor of the land or of the house to provide the necessary building equipment so long as both are separate occupations. Yet the tenants require more adequate building equipment. If the colony is to be worked by economic methods and to become permanent, as it shows promise of doing, this equipment should be provided. Rentals are not excessive, and if tenants are willing to pay interest on equipment, capital should not be spared.

Perhaps the chief differences between this group of holdings and most small holdings within the county is that the cultivators are mainly occupied on their holdings, and the working capital invested is more adequate to their needs. Consequently the land is well cultivated and the managers are seeking methods of making small improvements.

II. Scattered Holdings

At Hailey, near Witney, there is a remarkable group of very small holdings. One mixed holding consisting of 25 acres is worked by a builder possessing two horses. Eight other holdings varying from 2 to 5½ acres are worked by five labourers and three journeymen artisans. The wages of agricultural labourers in the district vary from 12*s.* to 14*s.*[1] per week without cottages. As the district is one in which arable land prevails, much time is lost in wet weather. Thus, the value of a holding to a labourer may easily be seen. The soil is light and dry on stone-brash, and can be adequately worked with one horse, and one of the labourers possesses a horse which does all the work. Ploughing costs 12*s.* per acre. The rent is from 26*s.* to 28*s.* per acre, but the land is situated on a good road, near to the homes of the cultivators. Barley and potatoes are the chief crops. From four to five quarters of barley are grown, according to season, and from five to seven tons of potatoes. The potatoes are of reliable quality and readily find purchasers. Last year[2] the prices realized ranged about £4 10*s.* to £5 5*s.* per ton. The labourers are enthusiastic pig breeders and feeders. One holder with 5½ acres makes a practice of feeding twelve bacon pigs per annum, in two batches, and the manure is returned to the potato land. This colony should be useful in assisting the tenants to larger holdings, but for the present the smallest holdings should be regarded as extended allotments.

A similar group has been established on like land at Finstock, near Charlbury. There are seven tenants of holdings of from 3¾ to 5¾ acres, one of which has been neglected, though the others are well cultivated for the production of potatoes and barley. The yields are similar to those obtained at Hailey.

At Northleigh, also in this neighbourhood, there is a considerable group of small holders. Northleigh has had a

[1] 1914. [2] 1913.

varied experience in the matter of allotments. One of the fields now let as small holdings used to be let as allotments, but it practically fell out of cultivation. The soil is a peculiarly tenacious clay close to limestone rock which in bad weather 'spews' at almost any point. All kinds of methods are adopted to protect winter wheat. A 'spew' is located and a trench is cut, when the water no longer appears in that neighbourhood but is detected elsewhere. Under these conditions it is not surprising that the allotments failed and the small holders find it difficult to cultivate the field. On the other hand, there is always a strong demand for allotments, and one field on what is locally called 'heath land'—a mixture of sand and peat—is in a splendid state of cultivation.

The parish is owned by J. F. Mason, Esq., M.P., the services of whose family to agriculture are well known. The last owner of the estate built a number of 'Swiss' cottages especially for the village, and the present owner is trying to establish a colony of peasant proprietors on the lines of Major Poore's colony on Salisbury Plain. He has set aside about thirty acres of land to be sold to labourers in the village on a basis of thirty years' purchase. Five per cent. of the purchase-money is to be returned to the Land Court, the executive body appointed by the purchasers, to be used for communal purposes. The purchase is to be carried out by deposit and instalment, and no restrictions as to use are imposed.

At Northleigh the County Council has six holdings ranging from eight to twenty acres, but some of the tenants have other land. One has thirty-five acres, eighteen of which are rented under the Council. Another has seventeen acres, five of which are taken from the Council. All this land was in a dilapidated condition when taken by the Council in 1909. The tenants have struggled, with one exception, to reclaim it, and are reaching success; but their opinion is unanimous that up to the present[1] no benefit has been reaped from their work.

[1] 1914.

The demand for small holdings amongst labourers and tradesmen arises partly from a feeling that they could make better productive use of land than some of the farmers. Perhaps they have worked for better farmers at some time, and their knowledge of the local lore of the soil is not insignificant. But they lack capital, and some, through lack of experience, are poor business men. Thus, when they get control of small parcels of land, they encounter difficulties for which they were unprepared. In particular, they find that a lot of capital is needed to cover the period required to restore the condition of land that has been poorly cultivated. This has been the experience of these cultivators.

The most successful occupier in this group has only seventeen acres of land. He keeps one horse, which does all the work, and which is sometimes otherwise employed. Practically the whole time of the man is occupied on the holding, for although he is sometimes otherwise employed with his horse, he, too, occasionally employs help. The chief sale crops are potatoes and wheat, while barley is consumed by pigs, of which a large number are kept. There is no grass. Clover and oats are grown for the horse, and sometimes beans to prepare a greater area for wheat than that provided by the clover ley. The yield of potatoes is good for this area, generally realizing about seven tons per acre. This is a case of an old-established holder with experience of his soil and the capital to work it, and the old holding is in good condition.

At Coombe and at Wootton there are two groups of holdings on stone-brash. At Coombe they range from seven to sixty-five acres, but generally from twenty to forty. With one exception the farming is mixed. Some dairying is done, but corn and roots are the chief crops, as no potatoes are grown. Some of the land was in poor condition when entered, and the results of the first two years showed a profit of a little over £7. But the cultivator had debited the land with the value of his labour, and had also consumed some produce, so that he was a little better off than he would have been as a labourer.

At Wootton are six holdings varying from nine to thirty-three acres, most of which are purely arable. The chief crops are potatoes, barley, oats, and roots. One occupier has been trying to maintain cows on arable land with the object of selling milk in the village, with some success. For this purpose he grows catch crops and roots, and he is entitled to the credit of being an innovator amongst small holders in the county. This system of arable dairying is one which deserves trial on small holdings.

The yield of potatoes is rather low, averaging about 4½ tons, but the cost of cultivation is also low, because of the ease with which the land is worked, so that there is a margin of profit for the cultivators. Most of the tenants have other occupations.

Two of the most remarkable small holdings in the county are situated in this stone-brash district at Ascot-under-Wychwood. Both consist entirely of arable. The first is forty-five acres in extent, and the rent, with interest on new buildings, is only slightly in excess of £1 an acre. This holding consists of one compact field, on which some fine crops are grown. The cultivator's leaning is towards stock-raising, and as he has but very little pasture, held as a separate occupation, his cropping system is directed partly to this end. Green crops for feeding and hay include sainfoin, clover, and vetches, with roots. Corn crops cover about half the area each year, and as plant has been laid down for making straw and corn into feed to be consumed on the holding, the land should reach a highly fertile condition in a few years. This holding is highly capitalized compared with some others, as a moderate estimate of the working capital would reach some £9 per acre.

The other holding of forty-one acres is of the same character, except that some permanent pasture has been laid down by the tenant. Cereal crops again cover about half the area, with vetches, clover, and roots on the remainder. Live stock is kept, and for the purpose of utilizing straw for feed an oil-engine and plant has been installed. This is probably the only oil-engine on a small holding in

the county. Yet both these cultivators, one with horse-gear and the other with an engine, agree that the installation of such machinery on such holdings as theirs repays the investment.

The reason live stock is kept is that the character of the soil requires humus as well as other fertilizing agents. On a large farm sheep would supply the place of cattle, but there is no place for sheep on the small holding except as a flying flock, which is not always profitable. There is little local demand for milk, and the quantities which could be produced would scarcely find a profitable market at a distance.

On the edge of the stone-brash north-west of Witney is a holding of nearly forty acres mainly arable, controlled by a man in industrial employment. Wheat and barley are the chief sale crops, with beans, barley, and mangolds as preparatory crops. Little stock is kept besides the necessary horses, the refuse from the woollen-mills being largely used for fertilizing. Near here is a dairy holding of fifty acres, consisting of thirty acres permanent grass and the rest arable. Some of the grass is planted with standard and bush fruits. Besides the cows, some young stock is reared. This holding illustrates the effect of training, or preference, on the type of farming. The cultivator is primarily a gardener or fruit farmer, and is also interested in stock, but poor management is shown on the arable land.

On clay soil between Witney and Oxford is an old-established holding of twelve acres and a homestead. There are two acres of permanent pasture, and on the arable the chief crops are wheat, oats, and beans. Two horses are necessary to cultivate the heavy land, and this number is kept. But the expense of maintaining them is too heavy for a holding of this size, and as there is little additional employment, either for man or horses, it is a struggle to make a profit, sometimes even to live. The land is highly productive, but losses of crops or stock cannot always be avoided, and a loss of £50 in one year 'took the heart out'

of the cultivator. Coming to this man from a few rather happy and apparently prosperous cultivators put some tragedy into the epic of the small holder.

On the sand, gravel, and loams in the neighbourhood of Oxford most of the holdings approximate to the type of the market-garden. The holdings at Eynsham call for no comment, as they consist for the most part of accommodation land, but one of the most interesting market-garden holdings is situated on gravel between Eynsham and Handborough. The original holding consisted of seven acres of garden land, to which has been added twelve acres of grass and thirty-one acres of arable. The latter may be considered as an adjunct to the former—the arable providing straw for manure, and the grass to carry the horses necessary for the garden work. One of the reasons for acquiring more land was to obtain manure, the previous [illegible] Oxford, which is seven miles away. Some of the [illegible] planted with apples and small fruit, but the specialty is made of cauliflowers, broccoli, peas and celery. In one year this garden of seven acres grew [illegible] which realized £300. Sensational prices have been reached for peas, £1 per bushel being reached on several occasions.

A rather serious aspect of this trade is opened up by a statement of the grower that broccoli were often sold to greengrocers at 1*s.* per dozen to be sold at 3*d.* per head. The only real alternative to selling to shops is to establish a shop or stall in the market. Many small gardeners hawk their produce sometimes establishing fairly constant connexions with private houses, but few gardeners can supply all the produce of this kind demanded by large private houses and in the end the consumers go to the shops.

It is important to preserve these numerous holdings, because the size and importance vary so considerably with the capacity of the cultivator and the situation. One man may obtain a living from 1½ acres of land, another only exists on four acres. Instances of this could be quoted. One holding of less than two acres, with small glass-house and frames, returns wages of cultivation and a profit to its

capable manager. But from four to six acres well managed would yield a good cultivator a fair livelihood. Fruit is not conspicuous in the Oxford district, nor is glass much used, except by florists. At Garsington one firm makes a speciality of tomatoes and cucumbers grown under glass. This firm also has both large and small fruit trees, which yield well. At Cowley and Littlemore a considerable quantity of peas are grown, and strawberries are grown at Wheatley.

At Weston-on-the-Green there is a large group of holdings on a very poor stone-brash. Here the yields are poor, 2½ to 3½ quarters of cereals per acre being recorded for 1912, but the cultivators are attempting to improve their land. At Charlton Otmoor there is a fairly large group of holdings of allotment type; most of the cultivators could be described as labourers. One exception must be made, however, for one tenant of a County Council holding has a farm of about 130 acres.

At Fencot, Murcot, and Charlton a number of people gain a livelihood by rearing ducks and chickens, especially ducks for Smithfield Market. There is no particular reason for the establishment of such an industry in obscure hamlets far from railway station, except that cottages which have an acre or two of land attached exist as a result of settlement, or of methods of obtaining land on the common, which remained open till a comparatively late period. Indeed, according to modern theory, which inclines to the view that a sandy or gravelly soil is necessary for rearing chickens and ducks, the rearers in this neighbourhood work under a great disadvantage, their soil being one of the heaviest clays to be found in England. However, with about an acre of land men have been able to earn about £1 per week in this industry, even when working on old-fashioned methods. Incubators and rearers are rarely employed, hens being used for hatching both ducks and chicks; nor does the Sussex method of cramming seem to be known. But close attention to their business enables these poultry farmers to obtain early ducks and

A few years ago from 15*s.* to £1 per couple was not an uncommon price for the earliest ducks. In recent years the net price received by the rearers for the same quality ducks has ranged from 11*s.* to 15*s.* The recent increase of interest in this trade seems to have led to a better supply of early birds. No attempt has been made by these people to organize their supply. This has been done by the Smithfield salesmen, who send crates to the rearers; the birds are killed, partially picked, and packed, and the crates are called for by carriers, who take them to Bicester Station. The salesman not only pays the railway company but also the local carrier, and remits to the producer the net return after the cost of collection, carriage, and commission have been deducted.

At Piddington there are some mixed holdings on very heavy clay, ranging from six to fifteen acres. Here two holdings may be taken, one of fourteen and one of fifteen acres. Each holding contains five acres of arable, and one horse is kept by each tenant. For purposes of ploughing a team is generally made up by three holders. The grass is mown, and then grazed by lambs and young stock. A number of pigs are kept. If the grass fields were divided and buildings provided, these holders would keep cows. At Fritwell and Souldern are small groups of holdings, the cultivators of which have other occupations. The farming is mostly of mixed character, and the chief crops consist of cereals.

At Blackthorn there is a group of eight holdings running from seven to fifty acres, on soils which vary between light loam and clay. Some of the occupiers are developing the production of milk, partly under the stimulus of the general organization of the milk trade in the neighbourhood. There also they are attempting the development of an arable system of dairying. The contrast between the pasture and arable systems in the amount of stock maintained is provided by a mixed holding of thirty-six acres and a pasture holding of forty acres. On the smaller there are six cows, five young cattle between one and three

years of age, two calves, two horses, and a large number of pigs. On the larger, four cows, six young cattle of about the same age, one calf, and a mare and foal. The larger holding has been established longer than the other.

At Dorchester, Tackley, Aston, and Cote, and in several other places, holdings exist which approximate very closely to types of holdings which have been described.

Broad generalizations as to the best type of cultivators cannot be made without risk of injustice. The strongest tendency discernible is that the whole-time cultivator is the best farmer, but there are exceptions even to this: so much depends upon the experience of the occupier and his command of capital; but when experience and capital admit of comparison, the man who is solely occupied with the cultivation of his land is the best farmer. Some men who use land as adjuncts to other businesses should, in the interests of agricultural production, be deprived of it or stimulated to make fuller use of its capacity. This applies particularly to some provision merchants, butchers, &c. For when the land consists of pasture alone it does not receive the little attention that it requires. Labourers with very small holdings of from two to five acres are usually keen cultivators, and when in command of capital might be encouraged to advantage. Some hauliers and carriers possess horses and equipment for working land which gives them an initial advantage, but numbers of them are inclined to sacrifice their land to the source of ready cash income. In the development of small holdings the principle should be maintained that the land should be fully used, otherwise the effort and expense of the State will be wasted so far as production is concerned.

CHAPTER VI

EMPLOYMENT, CROPS, AND STOCK

1. *Employment.* It is generally held that small holdings create more employment than large farms, and although it has been stated that employment cannot be regarded necessarily as an advantage without reference to the remuneration of labour or the returns from it, the facts are worthy of consideration. Perhaps the most succinct statement in respect to employment on small holdings in general is that of the *Census of Production*:

'It appears clear that the number of persons engaged on the land is much greater, in proportion to area, on small than on large farms. On the smallest holdings—one to five acres—the number of persons permanently engaged (including members of the occupier's family, but excluding temporary labour) is 13·4 per 100 acres. The average size of a holding of this group being 3·2 acres, there are about thirty-one occupiers to every 100 acres. Including the occupier, therefore, it appears that 100 acres divided into holdings of this size would employ forty-five persons permanently, and provide partial employment for between two and three more. Or, put in another way, that holdings of this size will, on an average, provide continuous employment for one person to slightly more than two acres of "cultivated land", or, if the rough grazings attached to the holding are taken into account, one person to about six acres. It is necessary to remember that of the total land occupied in these small parcels (including the rough grazings), only about one-ninth is under arable cultivation.

'In the next size group—five to fifty acres—the "density" of labour is considerably less, being in fact about half. About five of these small holdings would occupy 100 acres of cultivated land, so that the total number of persons

engaged, including the occupiers themselves, would be 11·1 (including temporary labourers, 12·2) per 100 acres, being about one person for every nine acres. If the rough grazings attached to the holdings are reckoned, the ratio is about one person to eighteen acres. The proportion of arable land in this class of holdings is about 17 per cent. of the total area, including the rough grazings.'[1]

As it is not practicable to apportion the agricultural employers and employees as given in the *Census of Occupations* between farms and small holdings, no accurate information is available on which to compare employment on various agricultural units. However, in the course of the survey some principles appear. For instance, it is not possible to compare employment on the type of market-garden holding which appears round Oxford with employment on a large farm. The gardener may be fully employed in his business, but any portion of his time up to one-third may be spent in the retail distribution of his produce. The farm labourer, on the other hand, is generally a primary producer, and the corn or beef he produces is distributed by the dealer and miller or the butcher. When the wife of the gardener takes in laundry work the family is not supported by the holding as is the case with the farmer and the labourer. Indeed, few men are fully employed or families supported by primary production on holdings of less than five acres in this county unless a considerable amount of glass is used. There are numerous cases in which a man is mainly employed on four acres, and some in which full employment is found by the addition of services of distribution to those of production. Even so, this is a high ratio of employment to land occupied when compared with that on surrounding farms. There is, however, a question how far the large farm could be adapted to the system of cropping adopted on the small holding because of the limitation of demand for produce. The real comparison is between the garden holding of less

[1] Cd. 6277, 1912, p. 24.

than five acres and the vegetable and fruit farm of, say, 100 acres, irrespective of county, although perhaps not without regard to soil capacity. Some few large farms of this character can show a greater ratio of employment in primary production to land than can many small holdings in this county. Again, when a holding of less than five acres, all arable, is cultivated on a system comparable to that on surrounding farms, employment of labour is generally greater merely because manual work is substituted for horses and machinery in some operations. Also, it is exceedingly difficult to estimate the ratio of employment to land on these holdings, because the occupier may at times be nominally engaged on his land—that is, he is not employed elsewhere—when he may not actually work more than a few hours in the day. For harvesting or potato-raising he may employ help, and sometimes when he is working elsewhere he may spend some hours in the morning and evening attending to his own crops and stock. There are also holdings in this group—those solely consisting of accommodation grass-land—which provide scarcely any employment at all, except when mown. The butcher's boy rides the ponies to the field in the evening and back in the morning. The grass may neither be harrowed nor rolled, nor the thistles cut, and a little fencing occasionally is the only employment provided. This also applies to some accommodation land in the group of small holdings over five acres in extent.

In the group of holdings of from five to fifty acres the difficulty of ascertaining the ratio of employment because of part-time occupation also exists. But here some definite evidence of the amount of employment is available. One holding of fifty-two acres—seven acres market-garden, thirty-one ordinary arable, twelve of grass—provides regular employment for the occupier and four other men, and intermittent employment for the wife and daughter: approximately 5½ men. This employment includes taking produce to market, but not retail distribution. A dairy holding of fifty acres, of which twenty consist of arable, fully employs

two men, and the tenant more or less regularly: approximately 2½ men. A holding of thirty-seven acres arable and ten grass, on which no stock except horses and occasionally sheep are kept, finds full employment for two men, and occasional employment for the tenant: approximately 2⅓ men. On forty-five acres of light arable in good condition the tenant and adult son are practically fully employed, and also a hired man occasionally: approximately two men. Another arable holding of forty acres on light soil, tenant and adult son nearly fully employed: approximately 1⅔ men. These examples have not been chosen for any other reason than that few complications were involved in the estimate of labour employed. On many holdings it is almost impossible to ascertain the amount of employment in the absence of a labour account. Thus these six holdings, of which less than one-fifth is pasture, employ about fourteen men on 232 acres; or one man to 16½ acres. Excluding the holding which is partly cultivated as a market-garden, there are 8½ men on 182 acres, of which more than four-fifths are arable: or one man to just over twenty-one acres. This ratio of employment to land is higher than on the farms surrounding these holdings, although not more than half so high as that given in the *Census of Production*, partly because these holdings are large compared with the average for the group. But it would scarcely be possible to find such a high ratio in Oxfordshire without including as cultivators men who have other occupations.

2. *Productivity: Crops and Stock.* Without too much insistence on difficulties, some general observations must be made on the comparison of productivity on large and small farms. As with employment, it is obviously unscientific to compare the bulk or value of a market-garden, possibly equipped with glass, with that of a corn and stock farm, or even a farm on which vegetables were grown out of doors. Even where the systems of cultivation are similar the comparison may not be accurate, because of the difficulty of determining how far the small holder is assisted by better soil, or access to a good road. Where a small holding of

thirty acres consists of one soil, and a neighbouring farm ten times its size consists of several, the factor of soil capacity enters largely into the comparison. At present no method of weighting soil-capacity in a comparison has been evolved. Nor is it easy to compare one small holding with another, especially with regard to value of produce. One small holder may claim that he sells produce which exceeds in value that of his neighbour on a similar holding. Both milk cows, but one retails the milk, whilst the other makes butter. Both rear calves, one largely on substitutes for milk, the other on skimmed milk and meals. The value of the milkman's produce includes the service of retailing, the other sells wholesale. The milkman buys concentrated feed while his neighbour raises it. In such case nothing but a detailed account will make an estimate possible, for even the number of stock maintained depends upon the feed bought. It may be urged that the manurial value of feed bought will enrich the land and thereby ultimately increase production, but this depends upon the balance of manurial value of feed bought and milk sold. For while the butter-maker does not buy feed he only sells his butter-fat.

Crops. The wholesale value of produce of market-gardens, without glass, except for raising plants, ranges between £12 and £40 per acre, but mostly round about £20. The retail value is about one-third higher. The value of the produce of gardens depends largely on its type. Celery may yield a high value per acre, but it is an expensive crop to produce. Cabbages may not yield such a high cash return nor do they cost so much.

The following figures were collected from twelve different groups of small holders after the harvest of 1913. All figures are for the first quality produce which is actually sold, except for roots, where they are estimates. Where high and low figures are given they refer to more than one holding, where only one figure is given to only one holding. Figures in brackets refer to one holding for some previous season within recent years.

YIELD OF CROPS PER ACRE ON OXFORDSHIRE SMALL HOLDINGS, 1913.

Parish in which group of holdings is situated.	*Barley.*	*Wheat.*	*Oats.*	*Beans.*	*Clover.*	*Hay.*	*Po...*	*Mangolds.*	*Swedes.*
	bushels.	bushels.	bushels.	bushels.	tons.	tons.	...	tons.	tons.
B.	36[1]	24	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
B.	32–48	32–40	32–40	24	...	...	4½–5½	...	...
F.	32–40	...	...	...	...	...	5–7	...	...
F.	32	36	...	...	...	1½	...	...	...
H.	32–40	...	...	...	...	...	5–7	15–18	...
M.	36–40	30	18½	24	...	...	4½–6½ (7)	...	...
N.	16–36 (44)	36 (48)	29	26½	2½	...	7	...	...
P.	...	28	...	25–28	...	...	...	...	...
S.	32	36	32	...	...	...	...	15	...
W.	20–28	20–28	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
W.	32–48 (48)	34–40	16	44	...	...	3½	15	...
W.	32–40	30–40	...	...	...	...	4½	...	...
Average, 1913	34	32	28	28½	...	...	5½	15½	...

[1] Oats and barley mixed.

These results are not so poor as they appear. In the case of cereals, gross produce would be some 4 or 5 per cent. higher than the net sale of cleaned corn. In the case of barley and wheat, the exclusion of the lowest figures, of sixteen and twenty bushels respectively, would have been justifiable as both crops were grown on land which had gone out of condition before it was taken by the small holders. Beans, too, are sometimes grown on land which is naturally unsuitable, as part of the cleaning and fertilizing process. Winter beans are sown, taken off early in the harvest period, and the land tilled and cleaned for wheat. But a good crop of oats is rarely seen on small holdings in the county. Some of the high and dry lands are better suited to barley, and the stronger land which would grow good oats is usually wanted for wheat. Some small holders would do well to take more trouble in the selection of seed, especially of oats and barley.

They might also pay some attention to modern treatment of potatoes, before and after planting, with advantage. Most small holders occasionally obtain a change of seed, usually during its second year in their locality. Few obtain fresh seed direct from different districts. When approached on the question of sprouting the seed most men seem to regard it as too much trouble, although they sprout for their gardens and have done so for allotments. One man who had a good deep soil on limestone said it would not work with his method of planting, which was 'too rough'. But if a good tilth were obtained and trouble taken with sprouting and planting it would undoubtedly pay, even though the holder were only growing main-crop varieties. One poor crop reported was directly due to disease, which would have been avoided by earlier planting, and by spraying. Not one holding was seen on which it was the custom to spray, 'though the men were used to the idea of spraying charlock.

Roots are often a disappointing crop on the small holdings of the county. Up to the present this has been partly due to the lack of fluid capital for the purchase of artificial fertilizers, and partly to lack of knowledge in purchase and

application. Many small holders' root crops are not heavier than those on surrounding farms, when they could and should be if attention were paid to tillage and treatment on small areas.

Fortunately few small holders sell hay or clover, so that instances of weight yield are rarely available. But the yield is certainly nothing like that obtained on some highly fertilized small holdings in Cheshire.

However, when all is said that can be said about the grain crops it is difficult to judge the gross production of arable land on small holdings. Two instances will perhaps suffice.

In the summer of 1913 the following crops were to be found on 12½ acres of arable on sandy loam: 3½ acres clover seeds, 2 acres oats, 3½ acres of barley, 2 acres of swedes, ¼ acre of carrots, ¼ acre of savoy cabbages, ½ acre of potatoes, ¼ acre of mangolds, ¼ acre of kohl rabi. Most of these were grown for feeding cows, a horse, and pigs kept on the holding. Another field on loam, some miles away, was planted as follows: sainfoin 1½ acres, mangolds 1½ acres, potatoes ¼ acre, turnips ¼ acre, beans 2 acres, vetches ¼ acre, wheat 1¼ acres, seeds 2 acres, most of which were being grown for consumption by the cultivator's family and stock.

On several County Council holdings which are large enough to support a family the production per acre would be some 20 per cent. higher than on farms in the neighbourhood, even where no great soil variations exist. However, the average production of all the small holdings, excluding the market-gardens, would not be much in excess of the average for the county, because of the existence of many holdings, used as adjuncts to other businesses, in which there is little stimulus to maximum profitable production. The small holder has yet to learn that he cannot run a small holding profitably on the rough-and-ready system on which many farms have been run for the last thirty years. He has yet to learn to economize in land by reducing fences and ditch banks and unproductive headlands to a minimum, as is done in parts of Lincolnshire, Cheshire, and West Lancashire, where small holdings are numerous; and that he must

increase production to the maximum possible at a reasonable unit cost in relation to price. How far the process of increasing productivity can proceed without increasing the unit cost to an unprofitable point can only be determined by experience. Small holders may begin to find out by keeping some form of business accounts. But this point has not been reached at present, and on most small holdings, just as on most large farms, production could be increased with a certainty of greater net profit from the total business.

Stock. In a county like Oxford, in which the majority of small holdings, even when partly arable, are run in connexion with another business, the chief live stock on the holdings consists of horses. To the carrier, the haulier, the provision dealer with a country delivery round, and the miscellaneous hawker, the horse is often the main source of livelihood, and the crops are largely produced for its maintenance. Thus, the full statement of the number of horses on holdings of less than fifty acres in extent would lead to the conclusion that these holdings were heavily over-stocked. The extent of the real overstocking with horses cannot be discovered, however, without an examination of the annual record of the employment of the horse. But there cannot be any doubt that this condition exists, for it is shown clearly by the competition amongst horse-owners for employment in some large villages. It is not only true that the haulier procures a parcel of land to maintain his horses, perhaps to employ them in spare time, but it is also true that the man who procures a parcel of land from which to procure a livelihood finds that his team, however small it may be, is not fully employed, and he too begins to compete for the available employment for horses. Indeed, the position of the horse on small holdings of almost every type involves serious considerations. The cultivator with one or two horses needs animals which are quiet, used to all kinds of work, and reliable. Often he has not the capital to spare with which to purchase the horse which will 'grow into

money', nor has he land to spare for rearing colts, even if young horses would be suitable for his work. Usually his horses are of the kind that are depreciating in value as the years go by, so that if they are not fully employed there is a loss on their upkeep. On holdings of which from twelve acres upwards consist of arable there are generally two horses. Both are not actually needed all the time, but they are urgently needed at the busy seasons. Should the land be heavy there are sometimes three horses on farms with twenty to thirty acres of arable, and with a comparatively small portion of pasture there is little summer employment. In almost every case Arthur Young's dictum 'that ploughing costs the small cultivator more than the large farmer' is as true to-day as it was nearly a century and a half ago.

On the small market-garden holding a horse is required for some purposes of tillage, for miscellaneous cartage, and for delivering produce, but only rarely is employment sufficient to pay for upkeep. In some parts of the country in which small producers of this type are numerous a horse is not kept. For ploughing and cartage when necessary a horse is hired, and the railway collects the produce, so that by organization, although of a commercial type, the small holder is saved the burden of maintaining unnecessary horse-power. In Oxfordshire conditions have not yet developed sufficiently for this type of organization, and the burden remains.

On dairy holdings consisting mostly of pasture a horse often supplants a cow which would be more profitable. When retail trade is done the light horse is necessary, but where produce is sold in bulk some organized system of collection would save unnecessary expenses were the holdings sufficiently numerous in one locality to pay for the organization. The mixed arable and pasture dairy holding presents the same problem as the mixed general holding. Horses required at certain seasons are idle at others, and some of their capacities must be utilized in other ways if loss is to be avoided.

Various plans have been devised to meet this difficulty. Besides a definite partnership in cultivation which has been mentioned, and which undoubtedly saves the maintenance of unnecessary horses, there is another instance of a working partnership which is not quite so definitely drawn. In one group of small holders who have each from five to ten acres of rather heavy arable, each man keeps one horse and three holders combine to make a team. This works fairly well when the work to be done on an individual holding does not consume more than a few days in each season, but where plots were larger difficulties of precedence would almost inevitably arise. Indeed, the man who possesses insufficient horse-power is always in danger of having to wait till the best of the season is past before his work is done.

The most general way of meeting the difficulty has been to keep sufficient horses for the heavier work and then to seek for them other employment. This sometimes leads to undue competition, and quite often to the neglect of holdings because the other work must be done at stated periods. Some of the holders of from thirty acres upwards find a solution by keeping one brood mare. When a foal can be secured nearly every season this works well, but one foal in two years is scarcely sufficient to meet the expense. On holdings of this size one growing horse may be kept, or foals bred, and possibly here is the best solution of the problem, because it leaves the cultivator on his holding instead of taking him away to other work. But there is no final way out of the difficulty, and whenever possible holdings should be sufficiently large, and should contain sufficient arable land, to maintain two horses, one of which may be producing something besides labour. Where little or no arable is present the larger holdings should be grouped so that some organization for the little necessary horse-labour on the holdings and the collection of produce may be provided. This also applies to holdings of from five to twenty acres on which informal co-operation in horse-labour should be encouraged in every possible way.

The best type of horse for the small holder is the half-

bred, or vanner, which can be driven at a slow trot on the road and is still heavy enough for the plough.

The most common bovine stock on Oxfordshire small holdings are cows and calves. Except for an occasional barren cow, no feeding is done on the small farms in the county. Milk, butter, and yearling stores are the chief products. On one or two large farms in the county hard cheese is made, but no small holdings are known on which this, or even soft cheese, is produced. Unless they feel the stimulus of the demand for milk, either for the local or the great central markets, the small holders of the county are apt to get into the backwaters of the dairying industry. The production and supply of butter is unorganized, and unless private or shop custom is found, the producer of small quantities is liable to be at the mercy of the dealers. Putting aside the general question whether butter-making pays or not, there is no doubt that a large dairy is immensely superior to the small one for the purpose of butter-making for the general market. Modern appliances and the application of trained skill can be used economically only in large dairies. The consuming market demands a standardized product of much the same quality, especially of colour and texture, during the whole of the year. This presents great difficulty for the small dairy, and no general advancement can be expected until holdings are sufficiently numerous to provide material for a small factory of the commercial or co-operative type. Perhaps some solution might be found along the lines of American creamery organization, by which one factory uses the cream of a large area. The milk is separated on the farms, being left for feeding stock, and only the cream is sent to the factory, so that transport expenses are reduced to a minimum.

The best outlet for the small holder's milk is through the direct retail, or supply to a local retailer; when small consignments have to reach a distant market the small producer will always be at a great disadvantage until such time as joint consignments can be made, or the collection adequately organized.

Too much stress, however, should not be laid on marketing, because of the possible advantages in attention to live stock. The small holder is attending his own stock, sometimes to stock which has known no other attendant, and if he is a trained man of kindly and painstaking disposition, he can undoubtedly give that close personal attention to animals which brings good results. But it would be a mistake to assume that these advantages always arise. The care given to an employer's dairy-stock by some experienced workmen is remarkable for its wisdom and conscientious kindness, while some small holders neglect important details in the treatment of stock. It is in the provision for milking that the small holder has the advantage over the owner of the larger herd. Here there is not the constant change which occurs on some farms with its consequent results in spoiled cows. Where no records are kept, the small holder who does his own milking has a better opportunity of judging the capacity of his cows; but in spite of this there are many who could not even estimate the yield of any given cow. Nor have any definite milking records been discovered. As a rule the small holders of the county have much to learn in the matter of feeding cows and of selecting animals for their milking capacity.

Small holders' cows are quite often of a nondescript character. A specimen herd of five contains a Jersey, a Jersey-shorthorn cross, a black Welsh, and two shorthorns. Such a mixture, of which somewhat similar examples are common, puts the owner at a disadvantage when the progeny are reared. A neighbouring farmer's shorthorn bull is often used, but even the yearlings are of various colours and sizes, and until good milking shorthorns are more widely diffused it will not be easy to procure a good type of cow for the small holding. Probably the Holsteins would prove suitable if they were better known, and if the colour prejudice could be dispersed. Could the small holders procure cows of shorthorn strain, with good milking capacity, and procure the use of a milking shorthorn bull through a Live-stock Improvement Society, they could in

time select the type of animal they require. At present they cannot often secure the use of a good bull of milking strain, because farmers generally have not adopted these strains. Where small holders are sufficiently numerous they might introduce one of the breeds which in some respects are more useful to them; but unless they have sufficient capital to purchase first-class stock and to find their way into the general market for special breeds, they do better to follow the general type of stock in their district.

This is particularly true where they raise store stock, as some small holders do. Rearing stock, however. is scarcely the type of business for the small holder when stock is the chief product. Keeping a couple of cows to rear from four to six calves requires cheaper facilities than the small holder usually possesses if it is to be profitable. In connexion with production of butter, stock-raising is frequently carried on, and apart from breed many excellent bunches of calves and yearlings may be seen.

A comparison of the head of stock carried by small holdings and larger farms cannot be made by the simple comparison of numbers, because in the case of milking cows so much depends upon yield of milk, which ought to be the chief test, and a great deal always depends upon the weight and quality of the animals. When the stock-carrying capacity of mixed holdings is compared it is necessary to know what proportion of cereal products are sold, and what amount of feed is bought. For instance, one pasture holding of ten acres nominally carries four cows, three young cattle, and a few sheep, and although little, if any, hay is bought, there is considerable expenditure on litter and concentrated feeds. This is an old-established holding, and doubtless the heavy stocking has enriched the land, but obviously it is not a system which could be generally adopted. On several holdings consisting partly of arable from which little besides wheat or, when grown, potatoes are sold, the head of stock is equivalent to one cow on two acres, which would be greater than on some neighbouring farms. This estimate includes sheep and horses, but does

not include pigs. But with mere numbers the comparison must stop, as no evidence as to the weight and quality of animals is obtainable.

As in the case of crop production, the maintenance of cows depends upon the development of the use of land. Few small holders treat their pasture so as to secure the maximum product at reasonable cost. In some cases land would benefit by the use of slag, which is not forthcoming, although some cultivators have used both slag and superphosphate. To educate them to the point at which they will use liquid manure and nitrate of soda on their pasture so as to maintain 'a cow per acre', as do some small holders on the old pastures of Cheshire, will take time; nor do they readily consider the idea of dairying on arable, or growing catch-crops to feed on pasture. But if their holdings are to develop along the line of maximum production some such departures must be made. On some holdings the chief obstacle to such ventures is the hope of accumulating sufficient stock to take a medium-sized farm, and the consequent disinclination to sink capital in the land. In a county like Oxfordshire, in which the small cultivator does not often come into contact with modern developments in agriculture, the more substantial of them are too much inspired by the hope of gaining control of land to farm on the easy-going methods of some farmers of their generation. In such cases the agricultural ladder does not prove to be a stimulus to production.

Unlike the horse, the sheep is conspicuous by its absence on small holdings. During the summer they spoil the pasturage for the cows by 'eating the heart out' of the clovers and grasses. To be handled economically, or even easily, they need to be handled in large numbers, and few small holders have sufficient area to provide change of pasturage. In some cases they appear in small numbers during the winter, and this might be more common if small holders had free capital to invest in lambs in the autumn to sell in spring. At present they need a more permanent investment of the capital at their disposal. So,

in the few instances when turnips and swedes are grown in excess of the requirements of cows and pigs. the cultivators sell their roots to larger farmers, who take a flock and hurdles to feed them off. The agreement sometimes includes a stipulation that a certain quantity of corn is to be provided by the farmer for consumption on the holding. In this case the payment is lower than when the farmer uses his own judgement as to the needs of the flock, but owing to the trouble of moving hurdles and flock the payment is never heavy, rarely exceeding £1 per acre. This system, where it exists, is part of the preparation for cereal crops. If the treading of the sheep is not necessary to consolidate the soil, it would pay the cultivator to install plant for preparing feed and increase the number of cattle, as is done in two instances. Apart from the objection of buying sheep to keep for a short period, small holders do not wish to lock up capital in buying materials for sheep-pens which would be required only for a short time; and by securing a large flock to consume the roots the land is quickly made ready for ploughing and for sowing wheat, whereas the few sheep which the holding would support permanently would be on the land for many weeks.

Pigs are very numerous on small holdings, especially those on which potatoes and barley are grown, and in some cases where butter is made. One holding of twelve acres was found on which there were thirty-three pigs of a value of over £100. It is not unusual to find three or four breeding sows, and a large number of stores or feeding pigs on a holding. Some cultivators of four or five acres feed ten or twelve pigs a year, and on some market-gardens of this size a number of pigs are bred. Small holders appear to have considerable advantages in attention to pigs, particularly in breeding, and while it is doubtful whether they maintain stores so cheaply as some large farmers, they make economical use of waste, and produce a considerable amount of food both for sale and home consumption.

Poultry are regarded as stock particularly suited to small holdings, but apart from the business of a few specialists

they are too often treated by the small holders themselves as merely 'barn-door' stock. Little trouble is taken in selecting breeds for laying or fattening, and if some pure stock is introduced it is often through fancy for a breed which has been seen rather than from any definite idea of specific improvement, and the result is to add one more cross to a breed of mongrels. Such a thing as a laying test is almost unheard of, and cramming is rarely resorted to. 'The corn is not missed, they eat the scraps, and the eggs and chickens bring in some ready money; as for anything else I don't know,' is the most general attitude towards poultry adopted by the small holder. Sometimes they are a nuisance when arable land is near the house, and sometimes the house is too far away from the land to make poultry worth the care involved. But something might be done through the rural schools, or by special classes for small holders' wives, to increase interest in poultry-keeping by small holders.

On the other hand, some few holders who make a speciality of poultry, though not 'in the fancy', get good results from their stock. They are able to produce eggs and chickens to the gross value of £70 or more per acre, which is the most intensive system of production in the county. But considerable skill, experience, and capital are required for this, and a man who produces £200 worth of stock and eggs may not earn more than 15*s.* or £1 a week. The future of poultry on the small holding appears to lie between this intensive system and the rough-and-ready methods of the barn-door flock.

If small holdings are to be successful and develop productive methods much education will be necessary, and the best way of securing this would be for the small holdings authority to run a practical holding on which systems of production could be shown. The methods adopted should not be too far in advance of the small holder's practice, but should be designed to show means of steady and practical improvement. In particular, the system of cropping arable land to maintain stock should have a practical trial on a holding of some thirty or forty acres.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The system of small holdings cannot be treated except in relation to the prevailing form of the organization of the whole agricultural industry. Where the intensiveness of the application of capital and agricultural science to the actual processes of cultivation is comparatively low, and is accompanied by a meagre application of commercial knowledge and insight to the business side of farming, the net results of the business to be divided between the managers and employees are small. In such case a labourer of experience and small capital may improve his individual lot, and also add both to the gross and net product of the soil, by becoming a small cultivator. But this by no means proves that the system of peasant holdings is the most economical that could be established, nor that it yields the best social results. It may prove, and often actually does, that the establishment of a number of small holdings, either separately or in colonies, is a distinct improvement upon certain phases of the prevailing system of organization. Further, it often proves that for some purposes the small holding is a unit which could not be dispensed with without economic loss. This applies more particularly to the various phases of market-garden and poultry production. When the production of meat (with the possible exception of pork and bacon) and of corn is considered, the small cultivator labours under disadvantages as compared with the large farmer; and in the dairy industry the advantages he enjoys in production are small, while the difficulties met with in the disposal of the produce are considerable, except where a good retail connexion can be established within easy reach of the holding. Nor would the economic justification of the small

holding be perfectly established even if its superiority over the prevailing type of larger farm were proved, for there can be little doubt that the purely economic interests of the nation as regards the production of the staple articles of the agricultural industry would be best served by a unit which gives the widest scope for capital and intelligence in all their forms, especially in the use of machinery and the adaptation of science to the practice of production. This implies a larger unit than even the prevailing type of farm in Oxfordshire, for it cannot be doubted that it would give net results which on fair division would provide better incomes for employees than are provided by many of the existing small holdings. It must not be forgotten, however, that much remains to be done to increase the application of capital on small holdings, especially in the form of machinery. Although there are many difficulties to be overcome, this can be done, and where small holdings exist in sufficient number to make the joint use of machinery economical the supply should be attempted without delay. But when the future of agricultural production is considered it is the difficulty of applying the practical results of science to small cultivation which is of greatest importance. On what may be termed the industrial farm, as at present organized in a few instances, the division into departments makes the application of specialized knowledge practicable. The small holder is, and must remain, the compendium of all resident knowledge of management, and the education of large numbers of small holders is an infinitely greater problem than the education of a comparatively smaller number of departmental and general managers of large industrial farms. On the commercial side, too, the best organization of (say) fifty small holders on an estate of 2,000 acres could not compete with the management of the same area as a single unit. At present, however, there is sufficient justification for the existence of small holdings on both economic and more general grounds, and some of these grounds will always remain. With these observations in mind, some of the conclusions which have been reached

after a study of the small holdings of Oxfordshire may be stated.

Soils and Markets. The primary consideration on the establishment of small holdings should be the character and location of the market. In a purely agricultural county like Oxfordshire the established channels of agricultural trade are provided for the staple products—corn, meat, milk, store stock, and wool. The means of marketing butter, eggs, poultry, vegetables, and fruit are apt to be both purely local and primitive. This means that the market may be easily overstocked, that it is subject to local influences, and when organized at all, is in the hands of local middlemen. Under such conditions the establishment of numbers of small holdings either singly or in groups often yields poor results. Amongst the many market-gardeners of Oxfordshire very few are in touch with Covent Garden, and practically none are acquainted with the best market for this class of produce: the industrial Midlands and the north of England. Amongst those who specialize in poultry a very few send their produce to Smithfield. The two colonies at Charterville and Carterton as at present arranged are best fitted for market-gardening and poultry, and the nature of the local markets for vegetables and poultry produce largely accounts for the poor measure of success attained by the holders.

When starting business, the small holder may use either the prevailing methods of marketing his particular kind of produce, or find a market for himself. The latter is often a difficult and sometimes a costly process, requiring both patience and capital. It is best done in concert, but in only three districts of the county are the small cultivators sufficiently numerous effectively to co-operate. Individual cultivators in each district have found good markets for their produce, but their individual success is rather a source of weakness than one of strength to the whole of the group. Isolated holders have established connexions in a few instances with commission agents in distant cities, thus finding wider markets, and many more might adopt this expedient. In some cases the addition of a few more holdings adjacent

to those already existing would secure a sufficient number of producers to make co-operation workable. And the system of grouping holdings in certain districts is much to be preferred to the establishment of isolated holdings, the produce of which can be marketed only by primitive methods, or when sent to distant markets constitutes a spasmodic supply, sent at heavy cost because consignments are small.

The direct retail or shop-connexion methods of marketing provide good outlets for small holders, but in Oxfordshire these avenues are fairly full. Further advance on economical lines must take the form of co-operative action for dispatching produce to distant markets or for providing local auction markets which will attract distant buyers. The city of Oxford is already the centre of a market-garden industry which would provide the goods for such a market.

The small cultivator occupying from twenty acres upwards usually follows the course of farming prevailing in his neighbourhood. In this case he adapts his cultivation to the soil, or adapts the soil to the system in the same way as the larger farmer, and uses the markets provided. Under this economic system he has few, if any, advantages over the large farmer. The future success of small holdings seems to depend upon some degree of specialization of production, combined with the organization of suitable outlets for produce.

In this connexion the nature of the soil is important. In spite of a few instances to the contrary which might be quoted, the success of market-gardening and poultry production depends largely on a location on fairly light and dry soils. In Oxfordshire there are several tracts where these conditions may be found, and with the organization of adequate facilities for selling produce the provision of more small holdings would produce good results.

The Unit of Production. The system of producing vegetables, fruit, and flowers on small holdings provides the cultivator with more advantages over the large unit than any other system of cultivation. A high ratio of capital and labour is employed per acre, with the close detailed attention necessary for the attainment of success, and though

there may be advantages in the use of machinery on larger holdings, many of the processes must remain of a highly skilled manual character. Thus, the labour of the family unit, with more or less self-direction or mutual control, is highly suitable to this type of production, and where the direct financial interest exists there is a strong stimulus to production. But modern market-gardening is not an industry which can be carried on profitably by custom and tradition, because it is so much at the mercy of a variable market. There is an ever-increasing demand for quality and variety, which calls for managers who are capable of close attention to a market and of appreciating its development, and able to vary supplies to meet the demand. Even if the market were stable for a considerable period the small producer of perishable commodities suffers considerable disadvantage in the disposal of his produce if he is supplying a distant centre. His consignments are small, and costs of transport comparatively heavy. The sums involved are not sufficient to justify frequent visits to the market to see that justice is done to supplies, or to compare methods of preparation or of packing. And if these methods are clumsy, or inconsistent with market conditions, the results are likely to be disappointing. In the end the producer is apt to be entirely at the mercy of the salesman, who may or may not have time and inclination to instruct the consignor. Thus, any development of market-gardening on small holdings must depend upon the grouping of holdings, so that mutual education in methods of production and marketing may take place, and good commercial or mutual organization of transport and marketing may become possible.

For the purpose of market-gardening a minimum of four acres of land should be provided, and this only when glass is to be used and the more intensive methods employed. If a small portion of grass for the maintenance of a horse, poultry, and providing an open run for pigs can be added, the position of the cultivator will be improved. Where the soil is really suitable holdings of a maximum of ten acres of arable land might be established. The provision of larger

holdings, unless there is a heavy application of capital and labour to the land, is likely to lead to a loose system of cropping which does not make the most of the soil. Where a man possesses sufficient capital to cultivate intensively a market-garden of from twenty to fifty acres he is usually in a position to compete with the ordinary farmer for land in the open market.

In the case of poultry-farming, so much depends upon the farmer himself that no rules can be laid down. But if more than five acres is required, other stock besides will undoubtedly be kept. From one to three acres is the most usual size of intensive poultry holdings in the county, and when heavily stocked, is practically sufficient to employ one person.

Next to market-gardening and intensive poultry-keeping there is no aspect of farming which is so suitable for the small holding as dairy farming, when the marketing of milk, or the manufacture and marketing of its products, is properly organized. Milk itself is practically the one farm product which the foreign producers cannot supply, and in order to reach its maximum production the dairy farm requires that personal sympathetic supervision which the owner of the cows will be most likely to give. But although the inability of the foreigners to reach the British milk consumer has left a practical monopoly to home producers, the market is fairly full. Occasional complaints arise that milk cannot be obtained in rural areas because it is sent in bulk to the large consuming centres, and here the small holder who will produce and retail can supply a need and build up a business. But in comparison with the market for wheat or meat the demand for milk itself is limited. The demand for milk products is still large, but the very inability of foreign producers to reach the consumers of fresh milk has compelled them to develop the manufacture of butter and cheese. Thus, once the demand for fresh milk is fairly fully met, the future establishment of small dairy holdings depends upon the ability of the dairy farmers to develop a supply of milk products of high and standardized quality.

Modern experience in our own, and especially in other countries, has shown that this can only be done by the factory system, and whether this is organized commercially or by co-operative methods depends upon the attitude of the producers of milk. But neither commercial nor co-operative action is possible until the number of producers in a given area is sufficient to provide a large and constant supply of raw material.

In Oxfordshire no dairy holdings of less than twenty-five or thirty acres, according to the quality of soil, should be established; and holdings of this size should be provided only where there is a large proportion of arable land suitable for green crops and roots to supply extra feed. Where this is not the case, and for a holding on which young stock is to be reared, a minimum of forty acres should be the standard.

Where cows are kept for the main or sole purpose of raising stock, or where young stock is raised largely by the aid of substitutes for milk, the small holder has few general advantages over the large farmer. Such advantages as he possesses are connected with the rearing of calves in the first six months of their lives, but his facilities are usually too expensive to allow him to compete successfully with the larger producer. Medium or poor land which is devoted to this purpose is better controlled in larger units than fifty acres. The place for the small holder is on more productive land where intensive application of labour and capital will be repaid in produce and profit.

Sheep-raising, too, is better organized on holdings of more than fifty acres. Where no rough grazings exist it is difficult for the small holder to secure a livelihood from sheep on his unit of holding. And where rough grazings can be had there will be much duplication of unnecessary labour unless flocks are grouped for attention on them. Moreover, the work of the shepherd is highly specialized, and few small holders possess the requisite knowledge or inclination to specialize in attending sheep.

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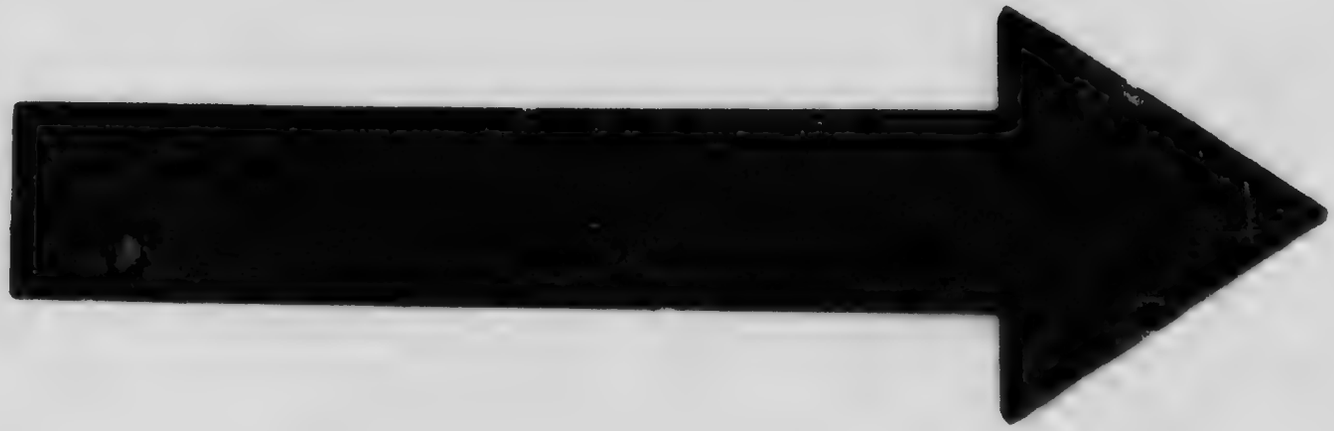

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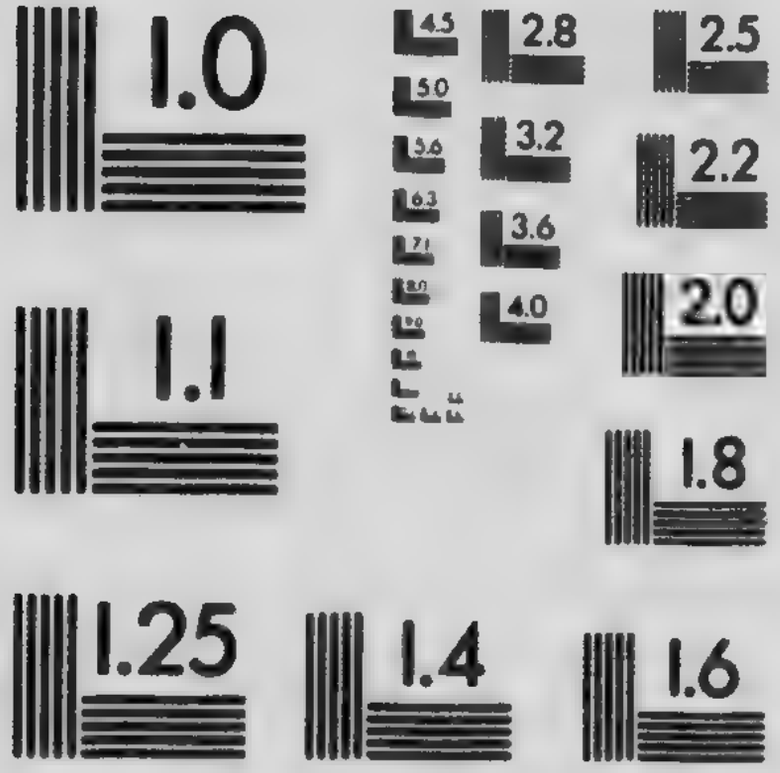

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arable or general mixed cultivation that most divergence of opinion occurs. Small holders pursuing traditional methods of organization and of cultivation 'can make a living' off twenty-five acres and upwards of arable land, or mixed arable and pasture, keeping two or three cows, rearing young stock and keeping pigs. But the primary essential for advance in production in both these types of farming is the expenditure of capital in machinery. The small holder with twenty-five acres of arable must keep a team which is unemployed about one-third of its time. He needs harvesting machinery which would deal as capably with 100 acres as twenty-five. If he would feed straw to stock he needs machinery to prepare foods for the most economic use. And it would be far better socially if an engine were installed to supply power for chaffing, cutting roots, and grinding corn, than for the small holder to spend the long evenings of the winter laboriously using a manual chaff-cutter, &c. Not a few farmers' sons have literally been driven from the land by the fear of the chaff-cutter.

However, it is in connexion with these systems of farming that low wages and intermittent employment have been associated in the past. The shepherd and the cowman are comparatively permanently employed, but the 'day-man' on the arable has had to 'lie off' during parts of the winter and to lose 'wet-time' in most seasons. Perhaps he has also enjoyed the possibility of piece-work earnings, but high spasmodic earnings and intermittent employment are not the same as regular work and a moderately sufficient wage. And just as it has been shown that large allotments have sprung up in connexion with this system of farming, so small holdings tend to develop from the same cause. Since labour has been tending to become scarce, employment has been regularized and wages have risen, and the demand for allotments is not so strong, so that the demand for small holdings may also decline; but at present it remains.

The great social objection to holdings of this type is that they entail uneconomic use of capital in machinery, or a corresponding unnecessary expenditure of manual energy. The

question of the economy of machinery enters into the discussion of holdings of every type, but it is nowhere so important as here. Machinery is particularly adapted to large fields and medium crops which occur in peculiarly arable districts. On a small highly fertilized dairy holding hay-harvesting machinery is not as important as on soils producing medium crops. Nor is there anything in the way of intensive culture on arable, apart from the manual cultivation suited to allotments, which is possible to the small holder and not equally so to the large farmer. When one sees a small holder laboriously lifting four acres of potatoes with a fork when there might as well be twenty or fifty acres to be lifted with a machine one realizes some of his disabilities. Doubtless something might be done by co-operative use of machinery, but a mutual organization of ten or twenty producers can never use capital as effectively as a single unit.

Owing to the necessity of finding economical employment for horses and machinery, arable or mixed holdings in which arable predominates should never be less than some forty or fifty acres in extent, when each is expected to employ and support a family. Families live on smaller holdings, but they do not obtain the best use of their capital equipment. A typical Oxfordshire farm of 300 acres, well cultivated, will support about six families—the farmer, five labourers, some boys or youths. Were the total income equally divided between six families the standard income would not be large, and on this basis the ideal holding for one family would be fifty acres; or with some increase in production when organized in small units, a minimum of forty acres. Except as used for market-gardening, or by expert poultry keepers, there is no system of cultivating land in Oxfordshire which will yield a family an adequate maintenance from less than thirty acres. An attempt to settle a greater population than this upon the land would almost inevitably tend to destroy the possibility of general advancement in agriculture and rural life. The necessity for hard and incessant labour, accompanied by a com-

paratively low income return, would stop the accumulation of capital and lower the material basis of life to a point which would not allow a high development of the *personnel* of agriculture. At present, at least one family on each farm attains an economic position from which intellectual and personal development is possible, and with progress in production, coupled with better commercial organization, a development of the large farm might occur which would bring better economic results to all classes concerned with cultivation. The settlement of a comparatively large number of families per 1,000 acres also raises the question of the amount of the net products which will be available for the support of an urban population. Up to a point net production and profit may increase with increasing settlement on the land, but beyond that point increased net production can only be obtained by a heavy expenditure of capital and labour per unit.

But not all small holdings will be expected to be sufficient to maintain a family. These holdings fall into two categories: those which are being used by labourers as stepping-stones to self-supporting holdings, and those which are used as adjuncts to other businesses. The sizes of these classes cannot be determined on any principle. The labourer is the best judge of the possibilities of other employment, and if he starts with an allotment of one or two acres, and some pigs, the gradual increase of his capital determines the amount of land he can manage. Amongst the present small holders in the county several cases of gradual progress from one to fifty acres are known, and in one case the process took exactly twenty years. Obviously, such progress depends very largely on local conditions, but in some large agricultural parishes where the demand for small holdings is consistent a system of grading holdings might be tried. It is certain that a labourer is much more likely to accumulate £150 through a gradually increasing amount of live stock and implements than, for instance, through the Post Office Savings Bank. Where there is no ambition to become purely a cultivator, the considerations arising out of the

village merchant's or tradesmen's holding are entirely different. There is no doubt that the butcher or carrier keeps his horse much more cheaply by renting land than by 'tacking out', or by buying provender. But that this class of occupier makes the best use of land is exceedingly doubtful. In many instances they are indifferent cultivators. The consideration of these holdings mostly lies outside the sphere of agricultural economics in that of the economics of rural life. For instance, were it to be proved better to supplant the village carrier by a line of motor-'buses opening up wider areas for both passenger and parcel service, it would be fatal to bolster up the village carrier by providing him with land for indifferent cultivation. Or if it were better to secure a general delivery of provisions from the market-town, it would be uneconomical to support the local grocer by allowing him to become a part-time cultivator. But so long as rural businesses are not subject to acute specialization so long will the local tradesmen be part-time, and somewhat indifferent, cultivators of land.

The conditions of high productivity on a small holding are (1) that it shall be sufficient to support a family when cultivated on the system best suited to market facilities and situation, so that it will absorb the whole time and attention of the manager; (2) that the manager live on or near the holding, so that live stock may consume all waste and no manurial value may be dissipated; (3) that the cultivator has a sufficient stock of implements and a little cash capital. Where there is evidence of high productivity on small holdings it is invariably due to the fact that nothing but finished products are sold, or, in other words, that no hay or straw and but little corn except wheat is sold; and that there is capital available for the cash purchase of fertilizers and feeding stuffs.

Colonies. The most disappointing feature of small holdings in Oxfordshire is the general looseness and lack of organization at Charterville, Carterton, and Stanton Harcourt. At the last-named group of holdings the problems arising out of its existence would have to be considered in

relation to the general organization of the village, as most of the cultivators live in the village itself; but in the other instances the colonies are distinct from the village settlements in the vicinity. There it is clear that on the establishment of a group of holdings provision should be made for some form of corporate organization of life. In the case of tenant holdings the best basis would be a land-renting association. For owned holdings there should be a central body still retaining some control after holdings were sold. Some organization is absolutely necessary, and it would preferably be democratic, any supervision by non-cultivators being limited to a number of years.

Such an organization should construct and maintain all necessary roads, main-drains, and water-courses, provide a water-supply, and set a standard of minimum requirements for sewage disposal, besides maintaining such other common conveniences as might be agreed upon. It should have a secretary and treasurer, and in a group of more than ten holdings, an executive committee. It should have power to raise money in the form of rents for the common purposes mentioned. These provisions would undoubtedly add to the initial cost of establishing holdings, but such cost would be more than fully met by the added economies of working and by the amenities of life.

Where a number of holdings are grouped together some almost invariably lie a little distance from a public road. Generally, there is competition for the front holdings, increasing the rent, or an applicant who does not care so much for the amenities of life takes the distant holding. The roads are generally poor, and the expense of maintaining a road in decent condition is too heavy for the small holder. But if the expense were spread over the whole group, an equalization of rents would result, and the society would be freed from the menace of a family reared in isolation, out of touch with the social influences of the village or group of colony houses. Somewhat similar considerations apply to the other general conveniences mentioned.

A very debatable point is whether, in the case of owned holdings, such a corporate body should have power to supervise the aesthetic qualities of buildings upon the holdings. But it is certain that there should be some authority able to guard the amenities of country life, and to save the land from such disfiguration as has occurred at Carterton.

An organization like that proposed might form the basis for further economic and social co-operation on the holdings which were so governed.

Without some provision for organization of transport and sale of produce it is exceedingly dangerous to establish large groups of small producers. The local market is soon overstocked with produce which is the speciality of small holdings, and there is a consequent decline in prices until the middleman relieves the situation. Quite often the middleman himself—the higgler or carrier—is also running a struggling business, with little knowledge of outside markets and little capital. And thus to one anomaly another is added. The commercial organization of agriculture must develop if the industry is not to remain stagnant. The stagnation which arises from the establishment of groups of holdings, distant from markets and without good organization, is very evident in some districts of Oxfordshire.

Rent. The rent of small holdings should conform to the prevailing rate of rent for agricultural land in the neighbourhood, with such additions for the value of frontages and special soil values as, in the judgement of competent authorities, may be necessary. However, consideration should be given to the fact that when stating his rent per acre a farmer generally includes a house and homestead. Where no permanent equipment in the form of buildings is provided with land for small holdings, this may reduce the value of land taken to that without special soil or frontage value. It may also disturb the balance of the organization and equipment of the farm, for which compensation to the tenant, or, in the case of purchase, to the landlord, may be necessary. In such cases the small holder

must bear a burden of rent peculiar to his occupation of land.

According to the official statistics the average rent of land hired by the County Council is £1 2*s.* 3*d.* per acre; the average price of the land purchased is £26 15*s.* per acre, and a gross return of 5 per cent. on this sum necessitates a rent of £1 6*s.* 9*d.* But the proportion of land purchased is only a little over one-fifth of the total, so that the average rent required on the basis of cost (taking 5 per cent. as the lowest possible figure for gross return) and of rent payable to the superior lessors is £1 3*s.* 2*d.* per acre. This includes all buildings supplied by the superior lessors, or existing on the land when purchased.

The average rental paid by the tenants to the Council amounts to £1 7*s.* 9*d.* This includes the repayment of cost of such equipment as has been provided by the Council and the cost of administration. The actual rents vary between 12*s.* 6*d.* and £2 5*s.* per acre. The rents paid by the Council are a little higher than the general rate of rent of farms in the county, because the land is so little accompanied by buildings. The rents charged to their tenants are considerably higher in proportion than the rents of farms, but the rents of small holdings existing before 1908, and of accommodation land, are higher than those paid by the tenants of the County Council. Many small holders have land leased privately and under the Council, and the former is invariably the more highly rented. The increase in the number of small holdings available has checked competition for small parcels of land, and a further increase would tend to bring down rents of the more highly-rented privately-owned holdings to the level of those paid by Council tenants, which would still leave rents of small holdings some 30 per cent. higher than those of large farms. This should be ample provision for special soil and frontage values, and compensation for disturbance of the organization and equipment of farms where such is necessary. If it were also sufficient to pay interest on the cost of an adequate permanent equipment of the holdings, the small holder would

have little ground to complain of the handicap of rent; but when the equipment must be provided by the tenant, or the cost becomes a further addition to rents already some 30 per cent. higher than those of large farms, the small holder will work under a serious handicap in the comparative costs of production on large and small holdings.

Equipment of Holdings. (a) *Permanent equipment.* Two questions must be asked before any criticism of the existing equipment of small holdings is made: (1) Are the present holdings of such a size and character as will provide sufficient income to maintain a family? (2) Are the present holdings likely to become permanent units in the agricultural organization of the districts in which they exist? Where the holding provides only part of the income of the cultivator it often happens that the business providing the other part of his income also provides at least a partial equipment of the small holding. Thus, the village haulier or carrier often has a stable or cart-shed unattached to the holding. Should his holding be purely arable this may be sufficient for present working purposes, but the lessors have no guarantee that there will be a permanent connexion between the holding and the house or business to which the stables are attached, and the holding may be merely a temporary unit. And where holdings are sufficiently large to maintain a family the lessor must make certain, as far as is humanly possible, that there will be such a succession of applicants as will make the holding permanent, before he can be expected to provide buildings or a house. One solution of this problem is for the existing tenant to provide temporary buildings, but where this is done the buildings are of the poorest description and totally inadequate.

There is no doubt whatever that the small holdings of the county are very poorly equipped. Possibly something might be done, had the tenants more capital, to provide a better class of tenant's buildings, built in sections, to be removed or sold to the succeeding tenant on a change of tenancy. But this would mean that the cultivator's house would be

detached from his holding. In some cases the lessors of small holdings, including the County Council, might become the owners or intermediate lessors of such houses and buildings as are inhabited and used by the cultivators of land now held separately, thus ensuring a permanent connexion. But the only adequate solution of this problem is to provide such holdings as would maintain a family in a neighbourhood in which they are likely to become successful, and then to furnish the necessary permanent equipment. The system of grouping holdings makes it possible to build houses on them, and yet to escape the possibility of social isolation of the cultivator's family. From every economic standpoint it is better that the house should be on the holding, but in the case of isolated holdings the provision of a house means less social intercourse for the tenant's wife and children. The wives of small holders, particularly, object to social isolation, and for this they have good reasons. In the case of non-grouped holdings where the land lies some distance from the village, the economic and social considerations can best be met by providing that some pasture land and buildings shall be attached to the house in the village, and that such shedding as may be necessary shall be provided for the distant fields. Between the year 1908 and the end of 1914, 679 applicants were 'provisionally approved' by the County Council, and some fifty-nine applicants required houses with their holdings, so it is evident that there is a considerable demand for houses with holdings, and where houses and buildings on or near the land are provided there can be no doubt that better results will be realized by the cultivators.

Where buildings are provided on non-grouped holdings it is necessary that they should conform to the demands of the type of production common in the locality, so as to ensure the greater permanence of demand for the holding. In such cases the exigencies of marketing almost compel the small cultivator to follow the lines of production common in the neighbourhood, and although the personal qualities or predilections of one prospective tenant might favour a type

of equipment not in keeping with the farming system of the district, there is no certainty of continued demand for holdings specially equipped. Again the provision of special buildings is best left to the tenant.

(b) *Tenant's equipment.* Judged by theoretical standards most small holders start their career in possession of too little capital. But the way in which men of this class in Oxfordshire are able to increase their working capital in a few years is remarkable. During the early period of occupation the family lives frugally. The implement equipment is rather meagre, and those which are used only occasionally are borrowed. Where it is intended to keep stock few adults are bought, breeding and rearing being resorted to. Several instances could be mentioned in which by these means an initial capital of £3 per acre has been increased to £6 per acre in three or four years. But the great danger is that a man who has done this on thirty or forty acres is led to think he could repeat the operation on 100 acres. This is a delusion from which a number of small holders in Oxfordshire suffer. So long as a man has sufficient capital to maintain his family for one year at the standard at which they are used to living, to pay one year's rent and rates, and provide the absolute minimum of necessary equipment, his personal attention and unremitting labour, with perhaps that of a son, will go a long way in compensating the holding for some shortage of capital by securing economies and avoiding risks. But having reached a fair standard of equipment for the holding the small cultivator should be given to understand that up to a certain point it is better to increase the application of capital to a given area of land, and often, a greater application of income to the needs of his family, than to enter a larger holding with inadequate capital equipment; that if he contemplates increasing his holding he should wait until he has accumulated sufficient cash capital to enable him to meet risks on a larger farm which were absent on the small holding.

No definite rule as to the amount of capital necessary per acre could be stated. A market-garden holding of five acres

may require more than a mixed dairy holding of thirty acres. The standard is best judged by the type of production warranted by the market and the soil. To deviate from the lines of local production, to establish a market connexion or to adapt a soil or cropping system, requires in most cases far more initial capital than to follow the common methods. On some holdings of from ten to twenty acres as they exist in Oxfordshire a lessor may be justified in allowing a tenant to start with a very small capital, and such holdings form suitable stepping-stones to larger ones of from thirty to fifty acres; but on any holdings from forty acres upwards the lessor should demand a standard of capital equal to that employed on surrounding farms. Society can scarcely afford to encourage a man to overwork or underfeed himself and his family even for the sake of the thrifty increase of his capital and the improvement in his position.

In the allocation of capital to the various purposes of the holding it is to be feared that the least productive part is that invested in horses. At certain times of the year the cultivator needs more horses than he can employ regularly; thus, unless he keeps a brood mare, or a young horse increasing in value, there is a loss on horses to be set against any gain in the other departments. Some economies might be made if a scheme of joint ownership and use of certain implements and machines could be worked. Unless this is done the holding is either poorly equipped or useful capital is locked up in machines used only for a few days in each year. It is this sense of uneconomic use of horses and implements which often induces the small holder to think he could work a larger farm.

All these considerations indicate the value of grouping holdings round one village in a district rather than establishing one or two holdings in each village.

Income. Very few small holders can estimate their income from the holding without an hour's thinking and calculation and some prompting. Some few could state the net cash profit from a year's working, without including the value of produce consumed. The best test many men have is that

they have maintained their families and increased the capital value of their stock. Against this test there is one strong criticism—that the income or increase in capital value is the earnings of the family and not of one person. Not a little of some small holders' capital morally belongs to his son or sons. While working on the holding they are maintained, and have a little pocket-money, while their work is of a value almost equal to that of the manager. In a few cases some items of live stock are regarded as belonging to the son, being intended to help him stock a few acres of land and thus start an independent business, but more often sons who have given three or four years' work to a holding feel it a grievance that they have no direct control of the results. Such a system is open to abuse.

Still, there is not the least doubt that most small holders live better, especially in the matter of food and fuel, than the farm labourers of the county. Vegetables, bacon, and often eggs are plentiful on most small holdings, and where cows are kept milk and butter is plentiful too. To an investigator who has dropped on the holding without warning at any time, the inherent hospitality of the cultivators has sometimes shown the general fare of the family. It is perhaps in the nourishment of the family, especially children, together with the occupation of larger houses, that the position of the small holder is chiefly superior to that of the labourer. This is partly due directly to income, and partly to the fact that the small holder and his wife are of a selected class. But when asked to compare their lot with that of farm labourers many small holders say 'we work harder for what we get'. Many writers on small holdings assume that these cultivators must work harder than the labourer, which appears to put the small holding out of consideration as a unit of production. Fortunately this is not entirely true. When competent as a cultivator and as a business man, even in the current methods of his district, the small holder enjoys some interest on his capital or profits of management, in addition to the wages of his manual labour. But when capital is accumulated it is

almost always the result of family labour, and the pooling of the entire surplus over consumption into one capital sum. Few small holders without sons working at home make much headway in the accumulation of capital.

The Social Ladder. Excluding farm bailiffs and foremen there were 9,451 farm labourers over twenty years of age in Oxfordshire in 1911. By the end of 1913 the County Council had provided about 200 small holdings, and besides these some 160 other holdings have been traced. This number of holdings, if they were all open to farm labourers, would provide means of becoming self-supporting cultivators for 3·7 per cent. of the total number of labourers. But of the total number of applicants to the Council less than one-fourth were agricultural labourers, and although no information as to the number actually provided with holdings is available, it is certain that less than 2 per cent. of the labourers have become holders because only 2 per cent. of the total number applied. Were the whole number of 'agricultural holdings under fifty acres in extent', as stated in the *Agricultural Returns*, open to the occupation of labourers some 28 per cent. could get control of small plots of land. But from general evidence it may be stated that not more than 4 or 5 per cent. of the labourers can become self-supporting cultivators. For the farm worker the social ladder is still very narrow, and almost the only hope for escape from his hereditary class is to enter a vocation other than the cultivation of land. So long as he remains in the rural districts his main hope lies in the direction of such an improvement of the general agricultural system as will provide a better return for all classes engaged in the industry, and which may open avenues to him for the development of special aptitude or skill in manual work, or in certain branches of management. Under careful consideration of the conditions of success the small-holding system may be extended much further to the general social benefit. One or two holdings, perhaps graduated in size, in each village, and where conditions are suitable, the establishment of colonies, can do much

to assist deserving workers to improve their individual position. But the general hope of the class must be in a greater application of capital and knowledge to agricultural production and business, and perhaps some organization for protection on industrial lines.

Education and Supervision. When the Small Holdings Act of 1907 was passed it was a social recognition of the fact that English farm and estate management had failed in some particulars. In some counties it had failed to provide the labourer with a standard of living regarded as necessary by society, or to provide him hope for advancement within the industry, and to some extent in the productive use of land. It has been one of the tenets of English rural economy that it is the duty of the landlord to foster improvement in production, and especially to provide the necessary permanent equipment. Gradually the responsibility for production has been shifted from landlord to farmer, till an owner cannot now lay down a system of cropping for his tenant; but every lessor can still demand a certain standard of production from the land he lets. The State, acting through the local authorities, is now lessor or sub-lessor of many small holdings, and upon the lessors fall the duties of the owner. Without suitable permanent equipment the tenant cannot work his holding properly; and when provided with proper equipment no tenant should be allowed to control land which is not properly used. It would perhaps be difficult to define the 'full use' of land, but competent agriculturists who know more than one system of farming can judge the capacity of a soil and a market, and small holders should be instigated to make the best use of their land.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to this is the lack of education. The Education Authority for Oxfordshire recognized this when it drew up a scheme for the education of aspirants to small holdings in 1911, but unfortunately this did not mature because funds were not forthcoming. The draft of the scheme classified cultivators of small holdings in four groups, which helps to show the possibilities of education.

'For men who, having saved a small quantity of money in the towns, wish to pass their declining years in the country', visits from the staff instructors in horticulture and agriculture seems to be the best way of providing assistance. Men who use small holdings as adjuncts to other businesses, 'except for occasional helpful advice only wished to be left alone. It is the farriery instructor they want, as well as the agricultural advisor.' Florists and soft fruit cultivators 'welcome visits from staff instructors, and the only way in which they can be benefited is by visits of the most competent instructors, with courses of lectures by recognized experts, and possibly, by experimental work carried out in the locality. The advantages of co-operation, need of careful grading and packing of their produce, and the best means of coping with the fungoid and insect pest are subjects on which lectures will be needed.' Men who having been successful as allotment cultivators, and hope to improve their position by increasing their holding, and eventually work up to a small farm, are regarded as those who will require and repay most assistance. But it was recognized that instruction must be given in the years of youth. For this purpose a scheme for keeping pigs and poultry in connexion with the trial allotments and the evening classes was devised. The subjects to be taught were to cover some principles of horticulture and agriculture, management of live stock, record-making and book-keeping, and some principles of marketing. It was designed that the whole course should cover indoor and outdoor work in summer and winter for some evenings in each week for three years. But here arises the crux of the question—the scheme would cost about £2,000 per year, while the County Council did not let 2,000 acres in small holdings. The difficulty of educating a large number of small cultivators is almost insuperable, and in practice can only be done by example. One holder adopts a new method which proves practical, and another copies his neighbour. The small holding authority might do much towards the improvement of holdings by running a holding for educa-

tional purposes. This seems to be much the best method of procedure. But much will remain to be done through the general channels of education to fit the youth of the villages to become managers of small holdings which will not be conducted entirely along traditional lines.

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